

# SA 4x4

MARCH 2020

Overland Adventure

**THEY SHOULD BE BILTONG**  
1970 Kalahari Crossing

**READY FOR RUSSIA**  
Motorhome World's  
Dreamcatcher

**TESTED**  
VW Amarok Dark Label

## Defender TROPHY

3 countries, 4 days



**DRIVEN** Mahindra Pik Up Auto

### GREAT ZOOKS

Jimnys beat  
Baboon's

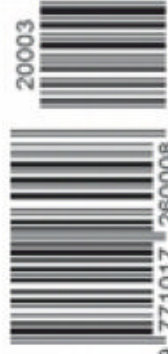
### WHOOOPS! NOW WHAT?

Dan Grec's Uganda mishap



**RECOVERY SERIES PART 6:** Shackles • **TRAIL SAVVY** The displacement replacement  
**WILD GUIDE** All kinds of monkey business • **BUSH CRAFT** That French delicacy

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There are quite a few people out there who would question the wisdom of most 4x4 adventures. They are sure to ask what motivates the desire to travel for days on bumpy gravel roads and, after hours of inhaling dust, to set up a flimsy tent on a windswept open area rampant with wild animals – then scabble around in the back of the vehicle for food and sleeping goods, while making a fire to cook on.

What's wrong, they tend to say, with manicured tarred roads, hotels with comfortable beds, and kitchens staffed by competent chefs?

We head out, I reckon, to reclaim a sense of adventure, to check out new places, and find some calm in the bush that you can't in town traffic. A 4x4 journey is a way to get back to the basics, toss out the clutter that keeps you busy at home. It's a chance to talk to your mates around a campfire, to see the stars, and reconnect with the elements. For sure, you can't do any of these things in an air-conditioned hotel room.

Just as certain is that there is a wide spectrum of 4x4 enthusiasts. There are those who buy their vehicles to dial in more power, lift the suspension, and fit bigger tyres so they can conquer Grade 5 trails and competitions. Some guys need their vehicle to work, or to get to a favourite fishing spot. Still others want to get to those wild, far-off places, keeping the vehicles pretty standard

apart from ensuring they have an easy-access camping set-up.

What kind of 4x4 owner are you? Long-term overlander Graeme Bell asks just this question in his column (from p.36). He and his family have been on the road constantly since 2012, travelling all over Africa and the Americas. He's done some thinking on the subject, and distilled his experiences so far into a couple of books, which are worth a close read.

This issue celebrates the old Defender in many ways. Graeme Bell incidentally drives a 130, and it's the vehicle theme of our cover story from Pat Cruywagen, a former SA4x4 staffer who flew out from the UK to join Johan Kriek's Limpopo Defender Trophy event. It's a blast for Landy owners, who get to do what they enjoy best: getting dusty, camping out in the open, and shooting the breeze with their buddies around campfires – for a good couple of days.

We also carry an account from Adam Alcock and his mates who got together a range of

Drive the dusty back roads of a few countries and camp in the wild. That sounds lekker. No hotels in sight.

4x4s, including a few modified Jimnys and took on Baboon's Pass. Part of the adventure was overcoming vehicle breakdowns, quite apart from driving a route with its share of challenges.

It's the lure of adventure that also motivated a crazy trip across the Kalahari back in 1970. Jürgen Hönsch and a friend – who knew their way around the South West Africa of that era – braved deep sand, steep dunes, and extreme thirst to get through. Thing is, they were driving a 1.2-litre Toyota Corona half-ton bakkie that could not drive in the tracks through the sand made by trucks. The adventure of a lifetime? Perhaps, though Jürgen agrees he could have ended up as a large stick of biltong.

Tell us what kind of 4x4 enthusiast you are, and why. Send in your crazy stories. It's what motivates us here at SA4x4.

**Angus Boswell**



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A few choice styling and aesthetic upgrades underpin this Special Edition of the classiest bakkie on the block.

### **80 PRODUCT REVIEW: Steelmate TPMS**

A solar-powered, external sensor Tyre Pressure Monitoring System, like the Steelmate TP-S9, has a lot going for it.



**Ironman 4x4 gear** (Submit a letter for our Forum pages)

**Fredlin Hoist** (Submit a Me & My 4x4 entry, page 96)

**A 4x4 Mega World Desert Air Jack** (Snap a pic of your ride in an exotic location, and post it on Instagram or send it via email. See our Readers' Rides section, page 82)

**WIN!**



## [REGULARS]

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## LIVE WITH THE FUNNIES

As an avid reader of SA4x4, I sometimes wonder at how nit-picky some people can be. I refer to the article in the Forum of the February edition, titled “Bakkie Oversights” on page 6.

One sometimes has mishaps that you cannot avoid. For argument’s sake, someone will have endless problems with a specific vehicle and the next owner will drive it till the wheels literally fall off and never have an issue.

Anthony Stokes complains about vehicle wiring. I’ve had my share of funnies in vehicles as well. My wife drives a 2009 Audi A3 Cabriolet, which had a fault come up that indicated a globe was not working. Checking all the fuses showed nothing amiss. I found a reverse light was not working, but even swapping globes between left and right proved the globe was not faulty.

Upon digging further (with the help of Internet forums), I eventually found that a wire in the gaiter that connects the boot lid to the body had broken due to repeated opening and closing. Another wire also looked suspect, so I repaired that one as well. The following time the fault occurred it was a case of a globe blowing.

Unfortunately, these things happen and it is usually no fault of the manufacturer. One has to live with these things. I had the remote locking and alarm arming unit pack up in my Mazda bakkie. I was fortunate that I got a replacement from a scrapyards as manufacturers are not obliged to keep a spare for a vehicle that’s 17 years old.

The fact that Anthony has these problems with a second-hand vehicle could be put down to how the vehicle

was treated by a previous owner – even the most careful ones. For example, I keep my Mazda fairly clean and do underbody cleaning with a high-pressure cleaner, but when I had to replace the fuel filler pipe, the amount of mud and grime that came out was still unbelievable. So no matter what or how faults can still occur by accident or through ignorance.

Incidentally, I have had two of the same faults on separate vehicles with tow bars fitted to them by agents. The fault was that the earthing for the trailer plugs were connected to the reverse lights instead of earth or the vehicle body. It took quite a while to work it out the first time; the second time it was a breeze. So you take your chances with secondhand vehicles and so be it.

**Willy Pittner**



## Write in & WIN!

The winner letter this month is from Willy Pittner, who wins a 60-litre Ironman 4x4 Maxi Case, worth R2 650. This hardy carry-all is the ideal way to secure recovery equipment, camping gear, and tools when on your travels. Made from tough LLDPE that is UV stabilised, with a wall thickness of on average 3.6mm, this range of hardy cases have large lockable, heavy-duty latches with strong moulded hinges. A handy tools/storage tray is included.



## FIND OUR WAY

We are planning a road trip through the Wild Coast and need to access detailed maps of the villages leading down to coastal places. Can anyone help? There are maps available, but they do not contain nearly enough detail...

**Bronwyn Marx**

**Johan Van Wieringen writes:** Hi Bronwyn, the maps you require are 1:50 000 government maps which can be obtained from the Chief Directorate Surveys and Mapping, Private Bag X10, 7705. When ordering from them you only pay for printed maps. If you order the digital form you pay far less.

I have all the digital ones for South

*Africa on six DVDs The files/maps you require to cover the Wild Coast from Port Edward to East London are:-*

*3128 Eighteen maps*

*3129 Twelve maps*

*3130 One Map*

*3228 Twelve Maps*

*3229 One Map*

*I stay in Pinetown in KZN so, if you are nearby, I could make a copy for you. Some of the files are quite big so sending them by email is out of the question. I don't have cloud back-up, which is another way to go. I prefer maps when on trips. I have an ammo box full of maps. When planning for our recent 16-week trip with my wife, I obtained all the maps of the West Coast and the northern border of Namibia.*

**Editor@sa4x4 replies:** Hi Bronwyn, while you wait for the Full Monty of 1:50 000 government survey maps, I would suggest purchasing the superb Wild Coast Touring Map from Slingsby Maps. The latest Fourth Edition, covering the East London to Port Edward stretch, includes higher resolution window sections showing the major towns and gives a 1:200 000 resolution (5cm = 10km) overview of the area's topography and road network. Plus, as usual, the Slingsby maps contain loads of information that is not available elsewhere – including lodges, campsites, accommodation contact numbers, shipwreck locations and updated comment on the roads. An invaluable resource. Go to [www.slingsbymaps.com](http://www.slingsbymaps.com) to order, or find it at your local bookshop or sports store.



## GAME OF AIR – REVISED

In our efforts to get the January issue to print, we introduced some errors in the text and tables accompanying our feature article in which we measured the effect of dropping pressure on the footprints and sidewalls of 16 popular all-terrain tyres.

We have placed all the new material below on our website [www.sa4x4.co.za](http://www.sa4x4.co.za), but decided to repeat the information in print for all those who studied the data and found it did not all link up. To those who wrote in pointing out a few errors, thanks for your input. Here we have included revised tables, some with added information and new rankings where we felt this would

add clarity. In the case of tyre weight and tread depth, we have included (on the website) the manufacturer's claim for the sake of comparison with our home-grown figures.

### SIDEWALL BULGE

Each tyre was fitted to a standard Black Rhino sidewinder alloy rim, in a pretty neat matte black finish. This was our benchmark for a sidewall bulge test, using a Vernier to measure the distance from the outermost point of the tyre to the rim first at standard 2.4-bar pressure and then again at 1.2-bar.

We expected the softer compound tyres to deflect the most, exposing more of their sidewalls to potential damage. The results do not bear this out.

While the actual deflection value is not huge by any means, those showing by far the most bulge of 10mm were one of the harder LT tyres (Discoverer ST Maxx) and one of the softer tyres (Hankook Dynapro RF10).

Those with the least deflection were not subjectively the toughest tyres either, being the Scorpion ATR (just 1mm) and the Bridgestone Dueler 693 (2.1mm). The General Grabber AT3 with its two-ply walls exhibited the same 3mm change as the tough 3-ply-walled Dunlop Grandtrek AT3 G (both 3mm), while most of the others hovered in the 4-6mm range.

TYRE NAME	SDWL 2.4	SDWL 1.2	OFFSET VALUE (mm)
Scorpion ATR	18	19	1
Dueler 693 AT	18,4	20,5	2,1
KO2 AT	17	21	4
Adventuro AT3	19	22	3
Discoverer AT3 LT	18	22	4
Grandtrek AT3 G	19	22	3
GO15 AT	18	23	5
Wrangler Adventure AT	20	24	4
LTX Force	18,5	24	5,5
Duratrac	21,5	25	4,5
Grabber AT3	22	25	3
Discoverer AT34S	19	25	6
Cross Contact AT	19	25,5	6,5
Raptor AT	21	27	6
Discoverer ST Maxx	17	27	10
RF10 At	19	29	10

Sidewall bulge offset in mm between 2.4 and 1.2 bar pressure. Not ranked

Therefore this comparison was not as conclusive or as clear-cut as we imagined. Temperatures will no doubt have an effect, but from this test alone, ride comfort could not be accurately predicted, nor does it show that one tyre or another will be prone to sidewall damage when deflated. In the field, the Discoverer ST Maxx has a proven record of handling rocky and stony conditions, while the same could not be said for the Bridgestone, which prefers to keep away from those Grade 4 and 5 trails.

Our guess? There will always be a trade-off between ride comfort, road noise and sidewall thickness, with the more road-oriented patterns being a little more flexible and mostly quieter. At pressures much lower than 1.2-bar, for example, most of the tyres on test showed great flex – precisely when delamination damage threatens.

TYRE NAME	FP 2.4	FP 2.0	FP 1.6	FP 1.2	FP 0.8
Wrangler Adventure AT	21,3	22,2	24,4	26,7	29,8
Duratrac	21,2	22,4	24	25,2	27,4
Cross Contact AT	22,1	22,4	23,4	27,6	29,8
Grabber AT3	25,7	26,5	28,6	31	32,4
Raptor AT	21,6	23	24,8	27,6	29,6
RF10 At	25,4	26,6	28,3	32,2	33,1
GO15 AT	21,6	23,2	26	29	31,4
Adventuro AT3	22	23,5	26	28,6	32,8
LTX Force	21,3	22,8	24,8	27,6	28,8
KO2 AT	24,6	25,5	26,7	27,3	28,5
Discoverer AT3 LT	20,6	21,3	22,4	25,6	28
Discoverer AT34S	21,2	22,6	24,6	27,8	31
Discoverer ST Maxx	20	21,6	23,2	26,8	28,2
Dueler 693 AT	22	23,4	24,8	27	27,6
Scorpion ATR	22	22,8	23,7	26	27,2
Grandtrek AT3 G	19,4	19,4	20,8	22,8	23,5

Test sheet showing footprint in mm at decreasing pressure - not ranked.



TYRE NAME	GAIN
Adventuro AT3	10,8
GO15 AT	9,8
Discoverer AT34S	9,8
Discoverer ST Maxx	8,2
RF10 At	7,7
Wrangler Adventure AT	7,6
LTX Force	7,5
Cross Contact AT	7,4
Discoverer AT3 LT	7,4
Grabber AT3	6,7
Raptor AT	6,6
Duratrac	6,2
Dueler 693 AT	5,6
Scorpion ATR	5,2
Grandtrek AT3 G	4,1
KO2 AT	3,9

Gain in mm from 2.4 to 0.8 bar pressure - ranked.

FOOTPRINT LENGTH

This was the core of our comparison and makes interesting reading. The pressure intervals that were chosen echo those typically needed for different terrain (2-bar for gravel, 1.6-bar for the rockier, tough stuff, 1.2-bar for deep sand, and 0.8-bar when needed to get up a steep dune or across a rough section).

The longest, fattest footprint at 0.8-bar came from the Hankook RF10 AT (33.1mm), followed by the GT Radial Adventuro AT3 (32.8mm) and General Grabber AT3 (32.4). Also expected, was the softer Yokohama Geolander GO15 At (31,4), followed by the Goodyear Wrangler Adventure AT (29.8), Continental Cross Contact (29.8), Velocity Raptor (29.6) and Discoverer AT3 4S (31).What surprised was how close behind the LT tyres were at this below recommended pressure, with the BF Goodrich KO2 at 28.5, Cooper Discoverer ST Maxx at 28.2 and the Cooper Discoverer AT3 LT at 28.0. Again, the Dunlop Grandtrek AT3 G moved very little, to just 23.5.

The specific extension values reflect a lot more about individual tyre constructions than showing a clear distinction between LT and P-metric, in most instances. Exceptions were the Pirelli Scorpion ATR, which stayed relatively rigid at 27.2, along with the

more beefily-constructed Wrangler Duratrac (27.4). What surprised us was that the Bridgestone 693 AT, touted as a more highway-oriented OE replacement tyre, showed a 27.4mm footprint – the fourth-lowest rating.

We have added a new table for footprint gain, to better illustrate which tyres extend the most when pressure was dropped from 2.4-bar to 0.8-bar. No surprise at the top three, the GT Radial Adventuro AT3 with 10.8mm and the Yokohama Geolander GO15 AT and Cooper AT3 4S, both at 9.8mm. What surprised was that the closest LT tyre, the Cooper ST Maxx, was right behind with 8.2mm. Hence a good combination of strength and footprint extension at lower pressures. As expected, mid-rankers hovering around 7.5mm included the Wrangler Adventure AT and ContinentalCross Contact, though we did not expect the Discoverer AT3 LT (7.4mm) to exhibit a bigger gain than the General Grabber AT3 (6.7mm). The stiffest of the lot were the remaining two LT-construction tyres, the Dunlop Grandtrek AT3 G (4.1mm) and BF Goodrich KO2 (3.9mm).

When tyres are hotter, with use off-road, we expect all these values to shift a great deal. Our static comparison indoors, while repeatable, does not showcase how individual tyres will react under actual outdoor conditions in a variety of terrains.

TYRE NAME	FOOTPRINT 0.8 BAR
RF10 At	33,1
Adventuro AT3	32,8
Grabber AT3	32,4
GO15 AT	31,4
Discoverer AT34S	31
Wrangler Adventure AT	29,8
Cross Contact AT	29,8
Raptor AT	29,6
LTX Force	28,8
KO2 AT	28,5
Discoverer ST Maxx	28,2
Discoverer AT3 LT	28
Dueler 693 AT	27,6
Duratrac	27,4
Scorpion ATR	27,2
Grandtrek AT3 G	23,5

Footprint at 0.8 bar - ranked.

OVERLANDER’S CODE

In response to a growing number of complaints about how we conduct ourselves in the wilderness, we decided to draw up and promote a code of conduct for overlanders. We’d like to include your input, comments and debate, so please send your suggestions to editor@sa4x4.co.za.

FIREWOOD

Take your firewood in with you; don’t chop down trees or gather dead wood within parks or wilderness areas.

**KEEP QUIET** We go to the bush to appreciate the sights and sounds of the bush. No music, and nothing louder than a spoken conversation.

RESPECT LOCALS – LAWS AND PEOPLE

Obey the rules of the place you’re travelling through. Respect locals and their traditions; if they don’t like having their photos taken, don’t take photos.

SUPPORT LOCAL TRADE

Your spending money at the local shops and lodges will make them see you in a different light.

**FIRES** Never leave your fire unattended; do cover burnt coals, and leave no trace of your bush camp.

ENGAGE LOW-RANGE 4WD

There’s nothing bok about tackling an obstacle in 2WD; you’re likely to damage the terrain. Engage 4H on gravel roads – it helps to reduce corrugations.

LITTER OUT

Don’t leave any litter behind (including cigarette butts). Pick up any litter you come across. Dispose of litter outside the park or wilderness area.

MAKE NO NEW TRACKS

Perhaps one of the most important ones from an environmental perspective.

POO BURIED

TOILET PAPER BURNED

GENERATORS

Switch off your generator before sunset; or, better yet, don’t start it in the first place. Rather use solar power.

DON’T FEED THE ANIMALS – BIRDS INCLUDED

**DEFLATE YOUR TYRES** Softer tyres not only improve your 4x4’s off-road abilities, but enhance ride comfort and decrease the impact on the environment.

NO OVERLOADING

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76, 78, 79

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## KNOW YOUR TREES

I read with much interest, Rob Thompson's account of his trip to Botswana in the article entitled "Solar 2: The Botswana Test" in the February issue.

However, the caption for the photo of the Khama Rhino Sanctuary campsite on page 54 refers to the two large trees as being baobabs. In fact, these are manketti trees (*Schinziophyton rautanenii*).

Unlike baobabs, these trees do not have hugely swollen stems and are more common in areas of deep Kalahari sand, such as occurs in the Sanctuary and which is clearly evident in the photo. The fruits are also much smaller, are egg-shaped, up to 40mm long, and contain a hard nut which is a favourite food of

the San people. The nuts are usually eaten roasted. The fruits can often be seen on the ground during the dry season.

A baobab (*Adansonia digitata*), with its characteristic fat trunk, can be seen in the background in the bottom photo on page 61. The area around Planet Baobab which is shown in the photo, near the village of Gweta, is covered by a very shallow layer of grey sand, which is underlain by rock-like layers of hard calcrete or silcrete. Baobabs also appear in the photo of Kubu island on page 57; here the trees grow amongst granite outcrops and hence any soil that does occur is very shallow. So at both these locations, there is an absence of deep Kalahari sand.



Manketti tree, not a baobab

The botanical names for manketti and baobab trees show that they do not belong to the same genus. In fact, the trees are not even closely related since they belong to two different botanical families: the baobab belongs to

the Bombaceae family and the manketti tree to the Euphorbiaceae family.

The last point is that Lekhubu Island is the more official name for Kubu Island although both names are used in literature.

**Grahame McLeod**

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- 8m heat resistant, heavy duty hose with inline pressure gauge/deflator
- Moisture and dust resistant



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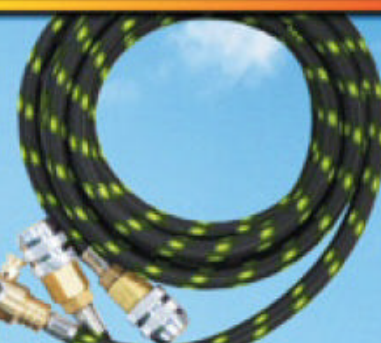
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## ROARING RAPTOR?

We love the Ranger Raptor, but in our opinion, it's a bit lacking in the engine department. Ford Australia is considering launching a Raptor with a Coyote 5.0L V8 from the Mustang. It is not confirmed yet, and will probably not be coming to South Africa. If you do want a V8 Ranger, check out the Road to Race Savage 660.

## Comments

**Gerrit A Naudé** No problem, fit a Lexus engine.

**Marc Dunster** There was a lot of disappointment when it was announced that the Raptor Ranger was a 2.0-litre diesel. There is nothing wrong with this type of set-up as the Amarok has been running it successfully for many years. When you attach the word Raptor to a vehicle you expect it to be a 'high performance' type pick-up. Yes, the suspension and overall design and set-up are way ahead of anything else on the SA market, but it most certainly is lacking on the power plant.

The Road to Race Savage is a great build but consider two things:

- 1) It's not a Raptor, it's a built-up Ranger that costs a fortune.
- 2) It's two-wheel drive, thus is not catering for those who want a 4WD vehicle.

Rather give us the 3.5 EcoBoost V6 in the Raptor Ranger, then it will be a different animal.

PS: It is still better than a Ranger with a Raptor kit and stickers.

**Riaan Smit** It will never land in SA. The problem with R2R is that you don't have 4x4, so what's the point? If you want a racer, buy a Mustang or the like.

## FUEL CONSUMPTION

We want to see some real-world fuel consumption figures. Either km/l or l/100km. Post them down below with the year, make and model, and engine. Please share the post with your friends in the 4x4 community so that we can get plenty of answers. Please only post off-road vehicle results, no road cars.

## Comments

**Craig Lord** Nissan Y61 Patrol 4.8: 22 litres per 100km. Haha.

**Quinton Schemel** 2000 4.0-litre Cherokee: 6.5km/l normal driving. 2.2km/l when 4x4ing.

**Riaan Pio** Hilux 2.4 GD-6 double cab 4x4: Average 11.6km/l and little more on the open road.

**Morne Van Den Berg** Wildtrak 2016 3.2 Auto with 275/55 R20 all-terrains: Average 8.6km/l. Met sulke syfers voel ek beter.

**Hennie Bester** 2015 Land Cruiser 76 4.5 V8: 5km/l.

**Keith A. Osler** 2002 LR Disco 2 V8 A/T: 20l/100km or 5km/l.

**Josh Kruger** 2006 Nissan Patrol 4.8GRX: 4.5km/l.

**Mike Hamilton** 2011 Toyota FJ Cruiser 4.0 V6: 7.0 km/l with mixed highway and short distance driving.

**Adrian Barnes** 2000 Pajero 3.5 V6: 6km/l regardless of load or trailer.

**Frikkie Lourens** 2002 Isuzu KB 2.5 4x4: 10km/l.

**Aj Pool** 2018 Jeep Grand Cherokee 3.0 CRD: 7.5l/100km @120kph open road and 10l/100km on urban roads.

**Bianca Potgieter** 2017 Isuzu 2.5 X-Rider 4x4: 9.5l/100km.

**Jason Van** Toyota Prado 4.0L V6: 14-16l/100km.

**Ben Visagie** Land Cruiser 76, V8, with RGM big turbo, 285/70 R17 tyres: Average 15l/100km combined open road and off-road.

**William Daniels** 1993 Suzuki SJ413: 6km/l.

**John E. Yazbek** 2004 Mercedes ML270, EGR & CAT delete, Unichip tune, 155kW on 265/65 tyres: 11km/l.

Thank you to everyone who replied to our fuel economy post, which made for interesting reading. We aim to do another one in due course.



## VEHICLE PROs and CONs

In your honest opinion, what are the Pros and Cons of your vehicle as it is?

## Bruce Farthing

**Pro:** It's a Land Rover.

**Con:** It's a Land Rover.

## Graham Lindemann 1997 Jeep Wrangler

**Pros:** It's a Jeep.

**Cons:** Fuel economy, Road handling, Expensive parts, Never done modifying.

## Brandon Danks

## 2013 Ford Ranger 3.2-litre

**Pros:** Super-low 1st gear in 4Lo, Popular vehicle so accessories and spares are available, Stock power is reasonable, Comfortable for a bakkie.

**Cons:** Theft risk, Kak boost pipes, Ford SA after-sales service is terrible, Not the most fuel-efficient vehicle once kitted for touring, Most Ranger drivers are A-holes.

## GOT SOMETHING TO SHARE?

Tell us about your travel experiences, comment on our stories, raise a debate about something that ticks you off, and tell us about your DIY projects. It is your Forum, whether in print, on our website or on Facebook. Send an email to [editor@sa4x4.co.za](mailto:editor@sa4x4.co.za), post on our website [www.sa4x4.co.za](http://www.sa4x4.co.za), or comment on [Facebook.com/SA4x4magazine](https://www.facebook.com/SA4x4magazine), and stand to win a monthly prize sponsored by Ironman 4x4.







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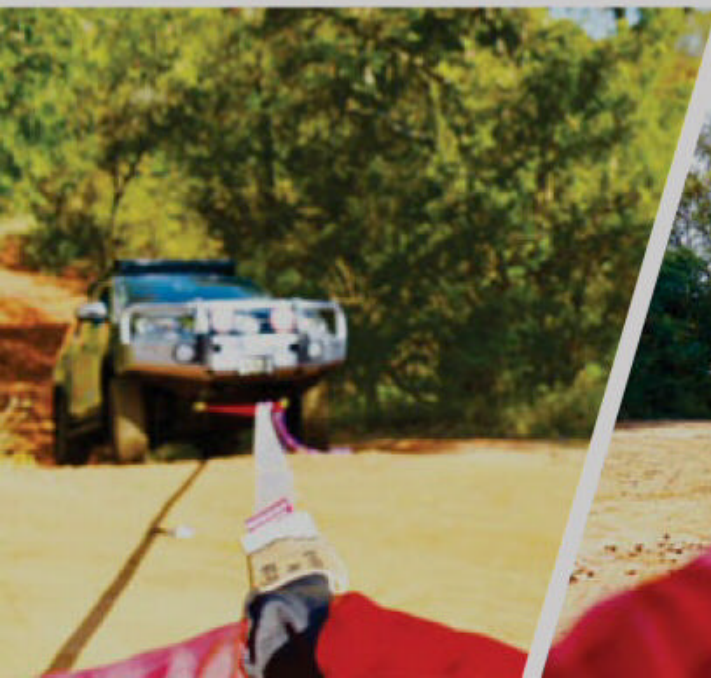
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## THE RECOVERY SERIES

Bow shackles of various sizes on display at 4x4 Mega world. Make sure the pin will fit your recovery point.

# PART 6: Shackles

In today's day and age, with access to all the information we have ever wanted at the click of a button, it is scary to see how uninformed people really are. As a result of this, we often hear about how things go horribly wrong when it comes to recoveries.

Which brings us to shackles. These are a key element in the recovery bag, and there are a few types available. For our purposes, they are typically a piece of cast metal or strong nylon rope used to attach a recovery strap to a point on the vehicle.

As with the straps, there is always a right and wrong application.

### Shackle types

**D-shackle:** These are NOT to be used for any form of recovery. D shackles are only used for lifting applications and are designed to take weight or stress in only one direction. They deform if stress is applied at an angle, which means you will not be able to loosen the pin and will then have to either cut the shackle with a grinder or cut your R1 000+ recovery strap. If you have one

in your kit, please throw it away or use it as a sinker on your next fishing trip.

**Bow shackle:** Bow shackles are rated to take a specific load, which is printed on the shackle itself (with a huge margin of safety built-in). They are also designed to take weight or stress at various angles without deforming. In our industry, the 3.75-ton shackle is the most commonly used size. The bigger shackles with a higher load rating can create a problem in that the 'pin' diameter is a lot thicker and does not go through most of the aftermarket recovery points.

**Soft shackle:** Soft shackles are the new buzz in the industry but they have been around for ages. People in the yachting industry have been using them in various forms for years, but typically use a lighter version than the 4x4 industry standard. They come with varying weight ratings so make sure that the rating is indicated on the actual shackle and that you buy it from a reputable dealer. It is also important to know that they have been tested and are not just a cheap rip-off.

### Bow shackle or soft shackle?

#### Pluses and minuses

First off, there is a massive difference in weight between a soft shackle and a metal bow shackle.

Soft shackles float in water, so the chances of losing them are slim. On the downside, they are very expensive. I can purchase five steel bow shackles for the price of one quality-rated soft shackle. Where you are scoring here is in the weight saving, as weight is truly the enemy when it comes to equipping a 4x4.

Soft shackles also need to be taken care of. Once you have used them and you get home, wash them. Simply rinse off in cold water and leave out to dry in a shady spot. Remember, do not use soap and do not dry out in the sun – both of these will destroy your soft shackle.

Bow shackle pins are easily lost in sand or mud. Guys have come up with all kinds of plans to try and counter this (including using string to tie the pin to the shackle) but the tethers don't last. I have even resorted to painting the





**Above left** 4.75-ton rated bow shackle. The real deal, designed to handle recoveries at any angle. **Above right** Ultra high Molecular Weight Polyethylene, trade-named Dyneema, is the material woven up to make a quality soft shackle. **Below left** Massive D-shackle. It looks strong, but a recovery at an angle is likely to deform the shackle, making it impossible to remove the pin. **Below right** A puny D-shackle – not suitable for recoveries of any sort. Add to your fishing tackle box as a sinker.



pins bright colours like red or yellow to help find them. Once you get home, remember to clean your bow shackles; a good rinse under the tap is good enough.

Bow shackles should NEVER be used to join two straps together. Because of their weight, they carry HUGE energy. If something goes wrong you will have a projectile in the middle of your recovery with potentially catastrophic results.

Soft shackles are a far better bet for joining recovery straps together because they are so light. However, they are not well suited for shock loads, so only use them for steady towing, rather than kinetic recoveries. There are other far safer means of joining straps which we will be demonstrating soon.

There are many videos available on YouTube where stress or break tests

are performed on both soft and hard shackles. Interestingly, the metal bow shackle can handle up to 25 times its rated strength before it fails. Soft shackles are usually good for about one and a half times their rating.

#### **So what do I use? Soft or bow shackle?**

That is like asking how long is a piece of string. My suggestion would be to have at least two of each. Why do I say that? When it comes to recoveries in water

or muddy conditions, I would use the soft shackle simply because you won't lose it that easily. For recoveries in dry conditions, I would use the bow shackle.

Having said that, common sense should always prevail and remember SAFETY FIRST! Make use of a safety harness on BOTH ends of the strap you are using. Yes, I know it takes time and effort, but rather make the effort than risk serious injury.

Safe off-roading! •

This series on 4x4 vehicle recovery techniques and equipment is brought to you by 4x4 Mega World and written by Bernie Williams, an accredited 4x4 guide and advanced driving instructor. Each month's content will be accompanied by a short video. Find it on SA4x4's Facebook page and on our website: [www.sa4x4.co.za](http://www.sa4x4.co.za).





## TRAIL SAVVY: Off-road driving tips, skills, & practices

# Downsizing and why it's the future

**W**e all love the sound of an old Rover V8 or the scream of a four-litre Lexus-powered Cruiser blasting up a dune. These large capacity eight-cylinder drinkers sure are good to hear and even better to drive – if you're not paying the fuel bill.

Nowadays, modern petrol engines have lost much of their aural tone and character, but despite being half the size they make the same power as V8s of 20 years ago. The case for diesel engines is the same, with downsizing taking effect and cylinder counts dropping. To keep power up but fuel consumption down manufacturers are using turbos. It's an established trend, we know this, but why has this proved to be the engineering solution?

The simple answer is thermal efficiency; the percentage of energy converted from the fuel into

heat and work. Despite what manufacturers advertise, all internal combustion engines are extremely inefficient, with only around 20% of the energy in petrol being transferred into work, with the other 80% converted into heat and dissipated into the atmosphere. Diesels are more efficient, with a thermal efficiency of between 30 and 40% in most cases.

Needless to say, converting the chemical energy in a fuel into heat isn't what we want and manufacturers are constantly striving to improve the thermal efficiency of engines by improving airflow, reducing friction, and pumping losses, and, of course, reducing the size of the engine.

### Doing more with less

When comparing two engines of similar design with differing capacity, the larger engine will always make more power than the smaller one. This is due to

its ability to convert more fuel into kinetic (and heat) energy than the smaller one. Because fuel burns best in a more confined space, an engine with more cylinders but the same cubic capacity as another engine of similar design will also produce more power than the former.

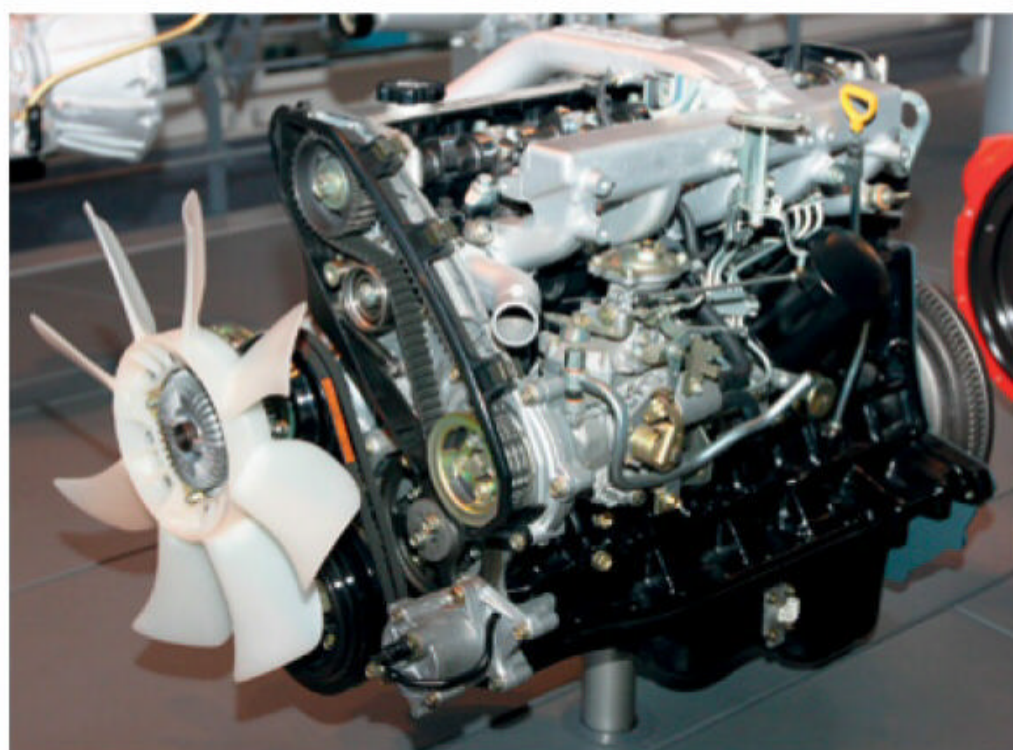
That said, times are changing and forced induction systems, such as superchargers and turbochargers, are altering the landscape of internal combustion. However, it's not that simple. Turbos are expensive to produce, increasing the complications of a combustion engine to the point where it may be cheaper to build a larger engine producing more power than a smaller engine to match this output.

Then again, the end-user and the emissions legislators have their way, because the reasoning comes back to thermal efficiency. That smaller engine will produce

less heat and will, therefore, be more efficient. In effect, a small diesel engine like the modern 2.0-litre mills found in the latest bakkies produce more power than much larger, more inefficient diesels of old design; a classic example being the naturally aspirated 4.2-litre six-cylinder 1HZ engines used in the 70 Series Land Cruiser, which produces only 96kW. By contrast, the Ford Ranger's new bi-turbo 2.0-litre diesel puts out 156kW.

### Benefits of turbocharging

By force-feeding engines air and fuel, turbos are able to boost the power of a small engine far beyond its unboosted potential. The major benefit is that engines can remain small, and a small engine will not only be lighter than a large one (enabling it to fit into smaller body style), but more efficient with less frictional and pumping losses. A smaller engine not only

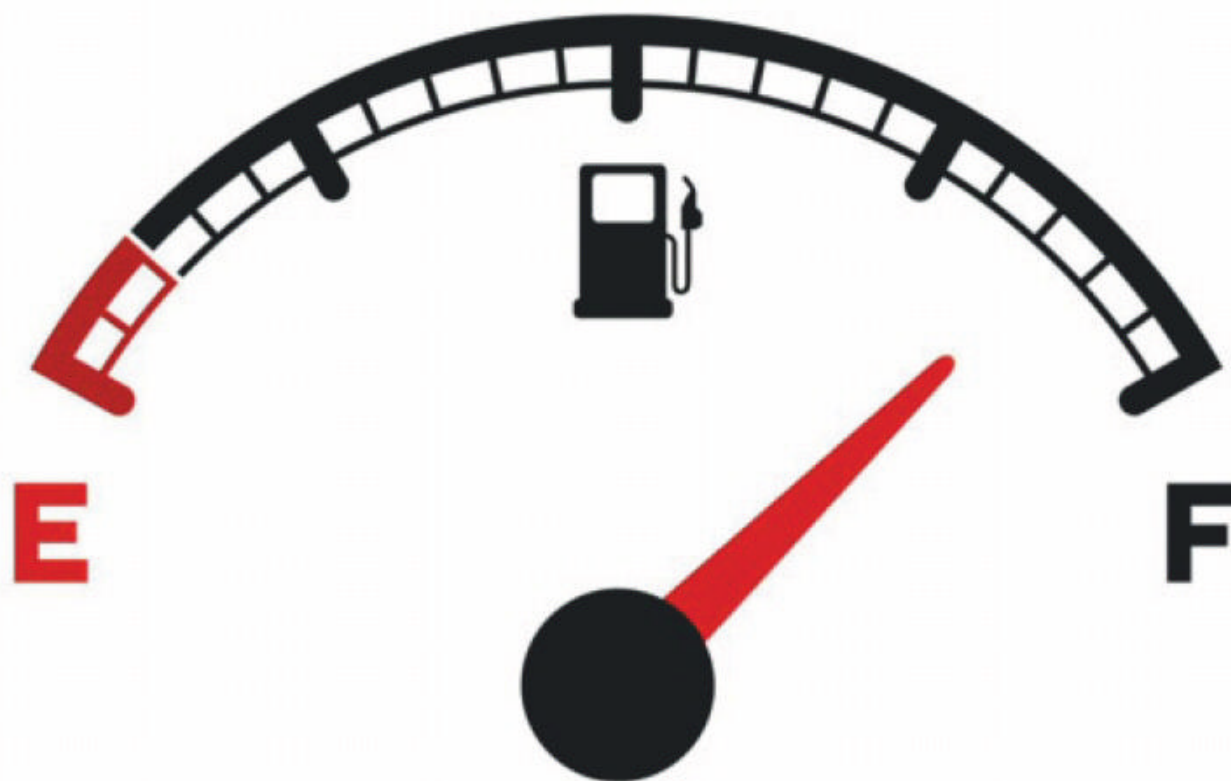


The six-in-line Toyota 1HZ (left) is an old-school naturally aspirated diesel that produces just 98kW from 4.2-litres of displacement. Ford's modern 2.0-litre bi-turbo (right) cranks out a phenomenal 157kW.



### WHAT IS A TURBO?

A turbo is what you get when you connect two fans on the same shaft. One fan is driven by the exhaust gasses being expelled by the engine, while the other fan compresses gasses going into the engine, force-feeding the engine more air. The energy that would otherwise have been wasted out of the exhaust can, therefore, be recycled to boost power. The more exhaust flow there is, the more boost a turbo can produce and the more power the engine will make, which is why turbocharged engines make very little power at low rpm where there is insufficient exhaust flow.



Yes, turbos are a replacement for displacement, and do offer an alternative route to power, but drive hard and the fuel consumption benefits will not be that great.

produces less heat, but it also gets up to optimal operating temperature quickly. Modern direct injection turbo diesel (and petrol) engines produce more power at lower rpms than a naturally aspirated one, and have a very flat torque curve from about 1 500 to 4 500rpm, delivering predictable power – especially in the mid-rpm range. Unfortunately, as engines get smaller and

smaller, larger turbos are needed to produce the same power. These take a while to spool up, resulting in ‘turbo lag’. Turbo lag is the annoying phenomenon of putting your foot on the throttle and being forced to wait for a response from an engine, which makes little power before the turbo is producing adequate boost. Engineers are getting around this with multiple turbos,

typically a small turbo with less inertia that kicks in early and provides boost before a larger turbo spools up higher in the rev range.

The major upside of a turbo for overlanding though is masses of torque. With much more torque than atmospheric engines of over double the size, turbo motors make perfect companions for those who tow or carry a big load, as 4x4 drivers and overland adventurers almost always do.

#### Downsides of downsizing

Though the benefits clearly outweigh the drawbacks, turbo engines do have their shortfalls. Firstly, because boosted engines are generally smaller than their naturally aspirated counterparts, they make very little power before the turbo/s come on song. Once they are producing full boost, you’ll also notice an

increase in fuel consumption. Keeping the revs low is the key to getting the best consumption possible out of your turbocharged engine.

Turbos spin north of 170 000rpm, glowing red hot at peak boost – an incredible rotational speed that requires perfect lubrication. Both the heat and high rpms of the turbo take their toll on your oil and the oil feed pathways in your engine, making it even more vital to change your oil according to the manufacturer’s recommendations, or sooner if you regularly drive your vehicle hard.

Manufacturers build in electric fans to keep temperatures under control and ensure the oil keeps moving, but it still helps to adopt a few techniques to preserve a turbo engine, including a cooling-down period after hard use. ●

The blades on a typical turbo, driven by exhaust gases, spin in excess of 170 000rpm, so keeping them lubricated remains a priority. New multi-turbo arrangements mostly eliminate the old problem of ‘turbo lag’ but add complication.



**Andrew Middleton** is obsessed with anything wheeled, and has been in and around 4x4s since before he could talk. He lived out of a Land Rover in Central America for eight months, and has been stuck – usually not for long – in every sort of terrain from the Okavango Delta to the Namib Desert. [andrew@sa4x4.co.za](mailto:andrew@sa4x4.co.za)





# Monkey business!

**V**ervet Monkeys (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*) are the most widespread of the African monkeys; occurring from the Ethiopian Rift Valley, highlands east of the Rift, and southern Somalia, through the eastern lowlands of Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia (east of the Luangwa Valley), Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and all nine provinces in South Africa. Like the Impala (*Aepyceros melampus*) of a previous article, vervets are often overlooked because they are so ubiquitous. Yet they are fascinating animals and certainly worthy of a second look.

The origin of the name ‘vervet’ is unclear; perhaps a shortening of two French words ‘vert grivet’ meaning ‘a green grivet’ (Gove 1993). Grivet, origin unknown. Whilst the etymology of their

name may be uncertain, their grizzly, silver-grey coat (which sometimes takes on a greenish tint – hence the ‘green’ in their French name), along with their characteristic black face, white eyebrows and long tail, make them easy to recognise in the field.

The hair around their face is tinged white to highlight facial expressions during social encounters. A vervet wishing to intimidate another will simply raise its brow to reveal pale eyelids; the stark contrast with the black face conveying an unmistakable message to the recipient. The other unavoidable feature is, of course, the male’s turquoise-hued scrotum. Nothing like a splash of colour to liven up your ensemble, is there now! So how do these primates actually get such blue family jewels? At a molecular level, the colour

originates from the Tyndall effect; the scattering of light by the skin itself, researchers say. The skin of blue-hued monkeys has unusually neat and orderly collagen fibres, according to a 2004 study. They’re so well organised that a change of as little as a millionth of a centimetre in

maturity, young males tend to migrate between groups – usually in the company of a sibling or peer. This is thought to help prevent inbreeding within a troop. In contrast, females remain in their natal groups and form strong hierarchies that are based on maternal social

***“Vervets give acoustically different alarm calls to different predators. Each alarm induces contrasting, seemingly adaptive, responses”***

size of, or distances between, would produce a totally different (and perhaps far less eye-catching!) colour.

Vervet monkeys are highly social and live in troops of up to 50 animals. Within a troop, adult males form a dominance hierarchy that is established and maintained by threat and aggression. At sexual

status. When babies are born, they are covered in black hair and have pink faces. They appear very different from the adults; a fact which is believed to help the troop identify the young so other adults and sub-adults can assist with their care. As is the case in most social creatures, communication is key and





*“Vervets can play an important role as seed dispersal agents to rehabilitate environmentally-disturbed areas”*



nowhere more so when you are on the menu of a number of different predators. In such instances, being able to notify your relatives where that threat is coming from is particularly useful. Vervets give acoustically different alarm calls for different predators. Each alarm induces contrasting, seemingly adaptive, responses. Animals on the ground respond to leopard alarms by running into trees, to eagle alarms by looking up, and to snake alarms by looking down.

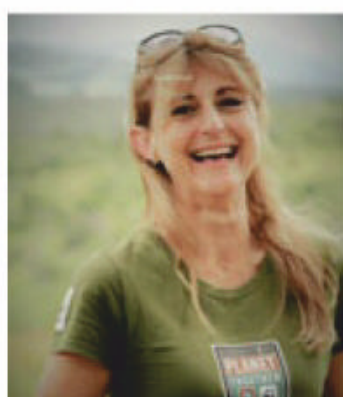
Whilst it is true that these intelligent primates can become problem animals around human habitation – in their defence usually because they are initially fed by people

who think they are cute, and who later react negatively when their behaviour becomes aggressive when they don't get what they want – vervets play an important role in natural ecosystems. One of these environmental functions is acting as an agent for seed dispersal. The seeds are ingested as food and pass through the monkey's digestive system intact, ultimately being excreted some distance away from where they were originally consumed. According to the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) vervets can play an important role as seed dispersal agents to rehabilitate environmentally

disturbed areas as a result of this behaviour. A good example of this is in dune mining rehabilitation projects in Richards's Bay in KwaZulu-Natal where researchers from the Mammal Research Institute at the University of Pretoria found that vervets played a major role in the restoration of

these areas, by ensuring that the indigenous vegetation was re-established in previously totally denuded areas.

So, go on, admit it... You are going to take a second look next time you see a vervet monkey if only to check out the more colourful parts of this article! ●



#### **Lorraine Doyle**

is the owner of Africa Nature Training. She writes about bush lore and the many wonders of the African Bushveld.

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## LIGHT ON A ROLL

Halo, the world leader in specialised LED strip lighting, has the perfect solution for lighting up the great outdoors. This handy lighting comes in 220V AC or 12V DC, and in lengths of 2.5m, 5m, and 10m. Individual lengths can be joined together when necessary for extra illumination. A big plus is that it's on a handy, wind-up reel – great for longevity and stowage. Halo LED strips can be used in aquatic applications (swimming pools, boating, marine, jetties, aquariums, fish ponds) and around your campsite. Designed to operate in the challenging mining environment, they are now available to the general public.

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## BRAAI AND VY

This highly portable fold-up 'laptop' braai from Roadque is the perfect travelling companion. Made from stainless steel, with a fine mesh grid, its legs fold up neatly so it can be inserted into the compact supplied drawstring bag and tossed into the back of your bakkie.

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## SEE THE LIGHT

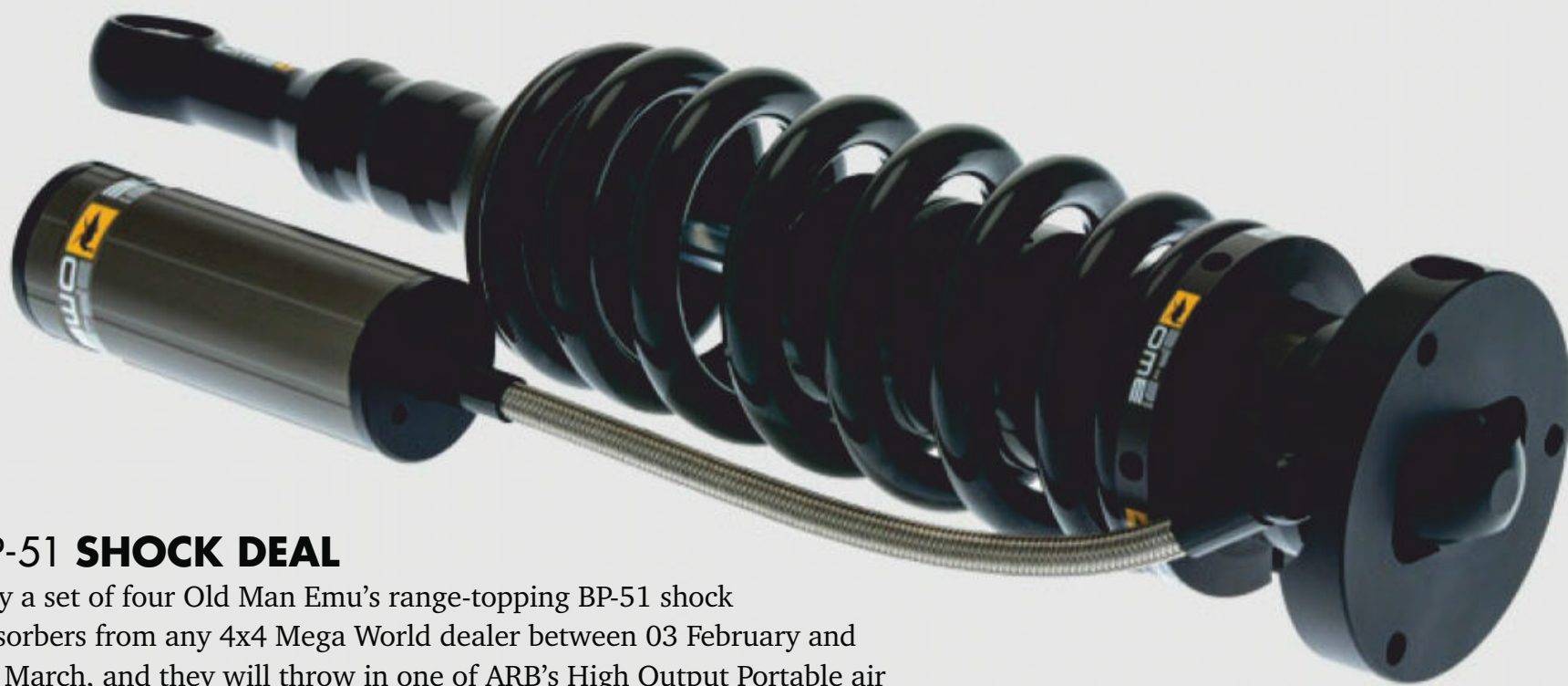
If you want to light up the area around the rear or sides of your rig, a vehicle-mounted floodlight is the way to go. Case in point, Ironman 4×4's Star Brite Light. This IP65-rated rechargeable portable floodlight uses bright, efficient, and reliable Osram LEDs, and has low-, mid- and high-output modes with 9.5-, 6.5- and 3.5-hours runtime respectively. Features include a shock-proof polycarbonate lens, quality reflectors, and a die-cast alloy housing that's built to withstand hours of abuse when travelling off-road.

**R1 995**

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## BP-51 SHOCK DEAL

Buy a set of four Old Man Emu's range-topping BP-51 shock absorbers from any 4x4 Mega World dealer between 03 February and 31 March, and they will throw in one of ARB's High Output Portable air compressors. It's a deal sweetener worth more than R6 000. Why would you want to splurge on a set of BP-51's? Well, this type of bypass shock absorber has been used for years in off-road racing, primarily because they are able to vary the level of damping according to the position of the piston within the shock body. So one can dial in more compliance at low speeds and firmer damping to handle big hits at high speeds. This is the opposite of traditional velocity sensitive damping in which the faster the shock absorber compresses and expands, the higher the level of damping force. Old Man Emu's BP-51 shock absorbers have the added advantage that the amount of bypass can be easily adjusted to suit different terrain, speeds, and loads. As for that bonus ARB compressor, it offers a class-leading flow rate and is constructed entirely of lightweight, high-grade materials. The on-board model is designed for air-locker activation and is supplied with a full wiring loom and mounting hardware. The portable model includes a 6-metre air hose, battery clamps, inflation kit and a durable carry case.

## CONTACT FOR PRICE

011 454 2558

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www.4x4megaworldonline.com





## TOYOTA LAND CRUISER 200

### Tech and colour update

The venerable and legendary 200 Series has received a few extra tech features for the 2020 range. The top-spec VX-R derivative receives a 14-speaker JBL sound system and rear-seat entertainment featuring 11.6-inch screens. Six exterior colours are now available, including a metallic Sparking Black replacing the glossy 'Attitude Black'. Midnight Blue and Sunset Dune have been discontinued while customers can option either Black or Beige interior trim. Each Land Cruiser 200 is sold with a 9-service/90 000km service plan, with intervals set at 10 000km or 12 months. A 3-year/100 000km warranty is included. Pricing is as follows: Land Cruiser 200 4.5D V8 GX-R (R1 086 200), higher spec VX-R (R1 510 100).



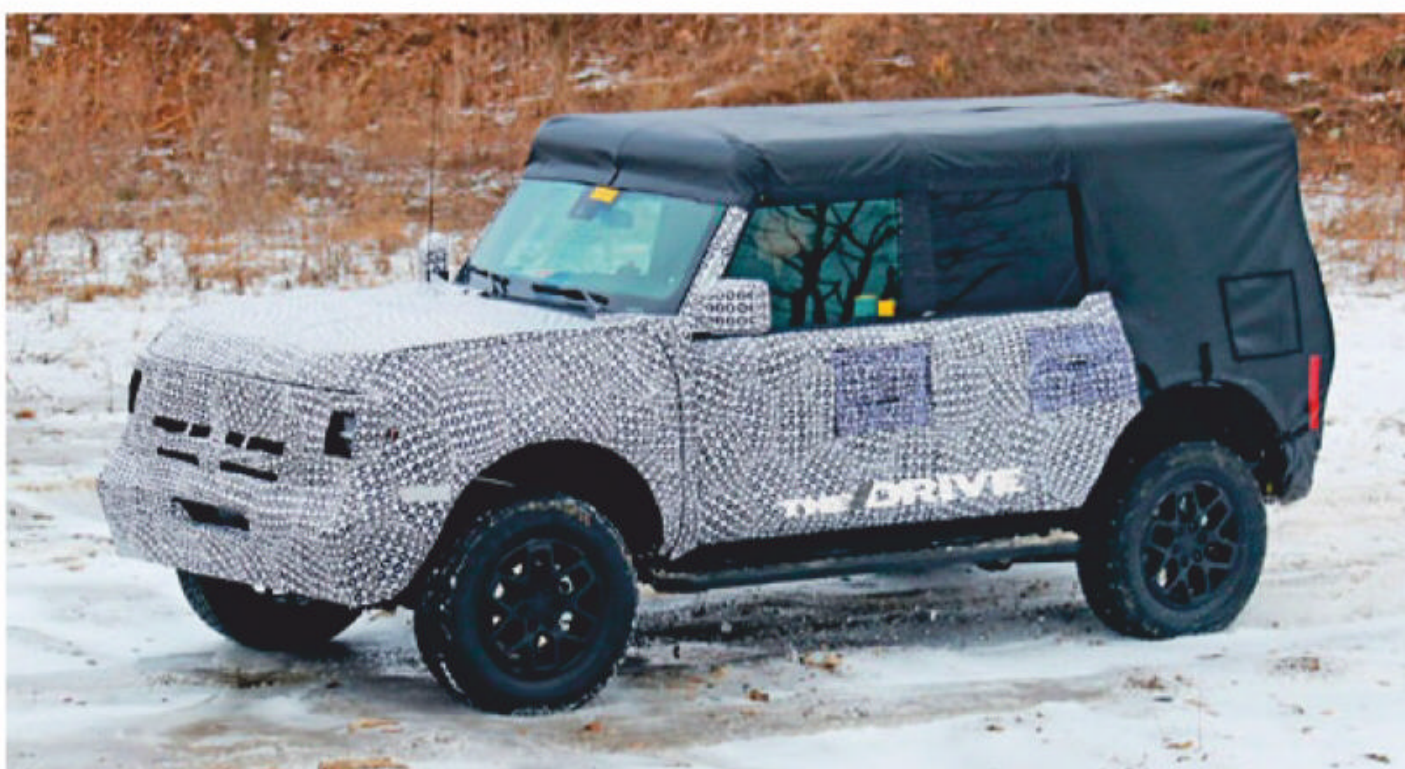
## JIMNY KITS

### Little B likes the mud

It seems everyone is getting on the Jimny body-kit bandwagon these days, with the Japanese firm DAMD right up there. Hot on the heels of a Jimny that looks like a Defender, and another that is a dead ringer for a diminutive G-Wagen is the new Bronco-esque version. The latest DAMD offering harks back to the heyday of big ol' American V8 SUVs, with mid-60s styling and rugged appeal. The Bronco body kit features a new front end featuring the 'Little B' moniker, a retro two-tone paint job, steel wheels, a rear ladder, and 'Dronco' badging. In case you were wondering, that means 'play with mud' in Japanese. Perhaps if you can't get your hands on the full-size yank tank (which was made in various iterations by Ford from 1965 to the mid-90s), this Little B will offer the same thrills for less.







## FORD BRONCO

### Back from the dead?

Recent footage released by Ford has revealed a camouflaged Bronco being heavily abused in the deserts of California by racer Brad Lovell and a couple of other Ford test drivers.

The short video doing the digital rounds reveals what appears to be a shortened Ranger, so the guess is that – like the Everest – it will borrow the chassis from the T6 platform. Power could come from the 2.3-litre EcoBoost engine, though Ford has a range of powertrains to draw from. The Bronco is initially intended for the left-hand-drive US market only, after being dropped from the line-up since 1995, but we can live in hope that a version will arrive on our shores.

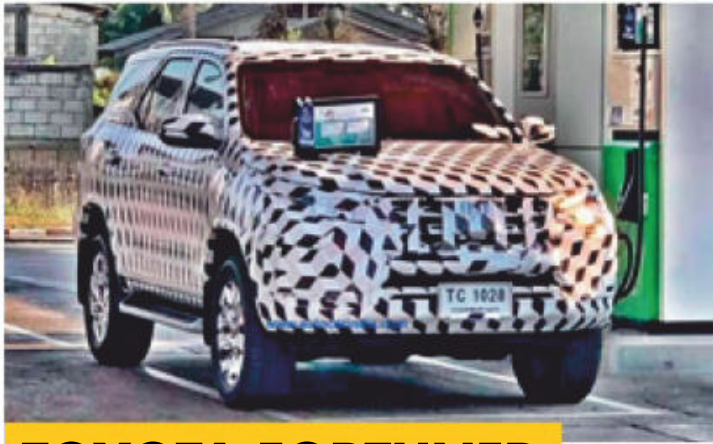
## HYUNDAI BAKKIE

### Inspired by the Santa Cruz?

Set to face off with mid-sized bakkies, like the Hilux or Ranger in SA, Hyundai's new bakkie will likely use a potent 205kW/588Nm 3.0-litre in-line six turbodiesel engine in top-spec form. This would make the Hyundai SA's most potent diesel bakkie by a long shot, eclipsing the Amarok V6 and soon to be discontinued Mercedes X350D. According to Albert Bierman, Hyundai's head of R&D, this large engine has many applications in Hyundai's future line-up, including in the commercial sector. The question remains whether or not offshoots from the bakkie could spawn a ladder-frame Fortuner rival in SA's hugely popular mid-size SUV sector, offering real-world off-road performance far beyond the soft monocoque SUVs, which Hyundai now offers customers. As to the styling, the Santa Cruz concept teased in recent years provides potent inspiration.







## TOYOTA FORTUNER

### Smile on the dial

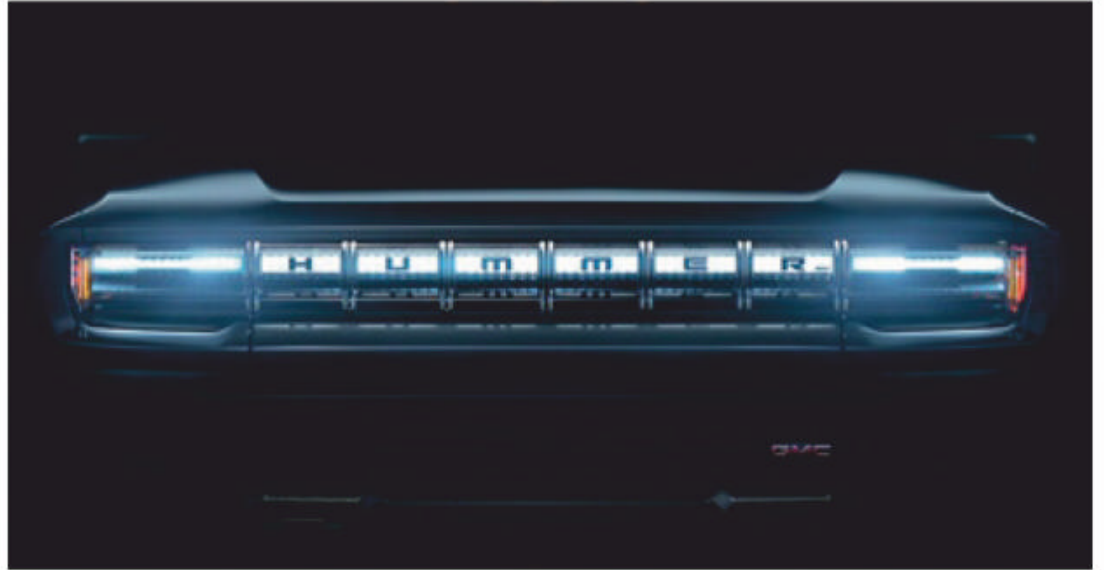
Consensus, based on a very grainy spyshot emerging from Thailand, is that the next Fortuner update will include the ‘upside-down smiley’ grille that is the new Toyota signature – featuring on the Hilux and the full SUV range, from Land Cruiser down to RAV4.

Word is the Hilux-based seven-seater will likely be launched locally later this year, replacing the current shape which debuted in 2015. Expect some minor interior tweaks as well, and the same reliable line-up of engines including the 2.4 and 2.8 GD-6 diesels, and perhaps another innings for the zesty 4.0-litre V6 petrol.

## GMC HUMMER

### Electric powerhouse

A new civilian-spec Hummer could be on the cards after a fully electric version with massive power claims was teased recently at the NFL Superbowl in the States. Details are still heavily under wraps, but talk at the showing was of power outputs of 746kW (1 000 horsepower) and a momentous torque figure of 15 600Nm. After being quietly side-lined, it seems the revived Hummer badge could have a new lease on life under the GMC (General Motors Company) banner. Looks like a challenge has been set for commercial electric-powered vehicles, a new sector where the likes of the Rivian and even Tesla’s Cybertruck are making bold claims.



## HYUNDAI GENESIS GV80

### A Korean Bentley?

The Genesis is Hyundai’s upscale nameplate, just as Lexus is to Toyota or Infiniti is to Nissan. The latest Genesis offering, the GV80, has been pitched to tackle the likes of the BMW X5 and Merc head-on, but you’d be forgiven for thinking the sights had been set a little higher.

Being readied for launch in 2021, it is clearly aimed at the American market where ‘gas’ (petrol) is the fuel of choice – hence a powertrain line-up comprised of a 3.8-litre V6, 3.3-litre twin-turbo V6 and a 5.0-litre V8. No surprise either that hybrid versions will almost certainly become available after the initial launch.

As to the aesthetics, inside and out, it was penned by designer Luc Donckerwolke, who worked on Audi, Lamborghini, and Bentley designs when employed by the Volkswagen Group, before he defected to Hyundai in 2015, joining another German design refugee, Peter Schreyer. Bentley’s Bentayga was clearly still fresh on the style boards when the GV80 was finalised. Just take a look at the massive grille and side vents, as well as the quilted seats. Even the Genesis badge consists of two wings with the brand name in the middle. There’s no word on South African launches or pricing just yet.







## UNIMOG U 5023

### Climbing to new records

A pair of Mercedes-Benz Unimog U 5023s have reached the highest altitude of any wheeled vehicle – further proof that they are among the most capable off-roaders in the world.

The trucks were driven up Ojos del Salado, the world's tallest active volcano located in the Atacama Desert in Chile, to a record-setting altitude of 6 694 metres (21 962 feet) above sea level. That's nearly the full height of the volcano, which is 6 893 metres high.

To put this in perspective, the Unimogs reached an altitude higher than the tops of Denali (20 308 feet) in Alaska and Mount Kilimanjaro (19 341 feet) in Tanzania. They also went higher than the *Top Gear* trio of Clarkson, Hammond, and

May when they went to the Atacama Desert. Those three made it to 17 200 feet before turning back due to lack of oxygen for both themselves and their SUVs.

The trip to this altitude wasn't just for the record, though. The Unimogs were transporting a crew of 10 people to a high altitude camp on the mountain where they installed four radio transmitters that will be used for emergencies involving mountaineers and researchers. The U 5023s were custom-built by Mercedes-Benz Special Trucks for this trek, and featured special off-road tyres, tyre chains, winches and outriggers that alter the vehicle's centre of gravity to help with the steepest ascents and descents.





# Auto perfection?

**Adding a six-speed auto to Mahindra's workhorse ups the game for this value proposition**

Report **Andrew Middleton**

**I**t's hard to argue against a brand new, top-spec double cab with all the latest bells and whistles for the same price as a five-year-old Hilux with 100 000km on the clock. That's precisely where Mahindra fits into the picture. This company, which now has 67 local dealers and an assembly facility in Durban, is pushing hard into the sub-Saharan market with a range of utility vehicles that offer extreme value. Surprisingly, at this price range, they are also producing high-quality products that are a joy to drive.

We did a thorough test of the manual (S10) version of the Pik Up (SA4x4 November 2018) and it came away with a positive review. And now, this beast from the East is offered as the S11, with a six-speed Aisin-Warner automatic gearbox that's not too far off the version fitted to Toyota's Hilux, Fortuner, and Prado. The difference here is that the manual override lets you upshift as well as downshift – a huge benefit, especially in sand.

Under the bonnet is the same 103kW mHawk 2.2-litre four-cylinder diesel. Though far from quick, it's a very tractable mill with minimal turbo

lag and plenty of get-up-and-go for daily use across both long and short hauls.

What also won us over was the basic nature of the machine – it's a true workhorse without trying too hard to be a luxury vehicle. The S11 is no different in these aspects but now offers a wider scope of audience thanks to its brilliant auto box – the automatic choice for well over 50% of bakkie buyers today. Linked with an Eaton Mechanical Locking Diff (MLD) rear differential, the auto box

## SPECIFICATIONS

### **Mahindra Pik Up 2.2CRDe Double Cab 4x4 S11 AT**

Price:	R414 999 (R429 999 for Karoo variant)
Engine:	2.2-litre, four-cylinder turbodiesel
Power:	103kW @ 3 750rpm
Torque:	320 Nm @ 1 500-2 800rpm
Fuel consumption:	Claimed 7.9 litres/100km/On launch 10l/100km
Transmission:	Aisin six-speed automatic
Ground clearance:	210mm
Approach/departure/breakover angles:	34/15/18 degrees
Service plan:	5-year/100 000km
Technical warranty:	4-year/120 000km



worked well on our rocky test route with the rear end locking up quickly over axle twisters without driver input. (See sidebar.)

Cosmetically, the S11 (auto) is near identical to the S10 (manual) version but does get minor exterior upgrades including a new grille, indicators integrated into the mirrors, modernised headlight clusters, and new fog lamps. The interior also gets a few significant upgrades, which bring the Mahindra's feature set closer to some of its established and rather more expensive rivals. These include a new seven-inch touchscreen with standard sat-nav, auto climate control, and multi-function steering wheel with buttons for the cruise control, phone link, and audio. What's more, the system links rapidly to a mobile phone, is easy to use, and works with precision.

Other safety and comfort features that bring out the luxury in this workhorse include traction control (not previously fitted on the Pik Up), electric windows all round, auto-locking doors, two airbags up front, and 12V power outlets front and rear.

If any criticism is to be raised against the S11 it is that the ride is rather firm; a traditional bakkie trade-off that begs for some weight in

the load bin, though it's understandable given the load rating of 995kg. The S11 Pik Up is also rated to tow a braked trailer to a maximum of 2 500kg. Another quibble is that the interior is mildly cramped on the driver's right side, though the quality of materials and fit and finish in this department have been smartly stepped up. And while we approve of the fitment of the Eaton mechanically locking differential, which is foolproof and requires zero driver input, it can be harsh in operation. Eaton's E-Locker, a push-button version with similarly robust mechanical components, would be a desirable option.

### Karoo Special Edition

For those that want some added kit, Mahindra has the Karoo Edition on offer, first introduced in 2018 when it opened the KZN assembly facility, and now available in both 2x4 and 4x4 double cab variants, and across the range of S6, S10, and S11 derivatives. On the latter range-topper, an extra R15k gifts the buyer those distinctive Karoo decals, a set of bling alloys, better tyres, a black cosmetic package with side steps, and a black nudge bar, plus the functional addition of a rubberised load bay and custom lockable roller deck to keep goods secure. ●

### THE EATON MLD

During normal driving conditions, the Eaton MLD functions as a light-bias limited-slip differential. When a low-traction situation occurs that causes a wheel speed difference greater than 100 RPM, a flyweight mechanism opens to engage a latching bracket. The stopped flyweight triggers a self-energising clutch system, forcing a cam plate to ramp upon a side gear. This continues until both axles turn at the same speed (full lock), which prevents further wheel slip. When the need for improved traction is no more, unlocking occurs automatically and the differential resumes normal operation.  
(From [www.eaton.in](http://www.eaton.in))









The second 2019 Defender Trophy event kicked off in Limpopo and was unique in that participants camped in three different countries...

# DEFENDERS ON TOUR

Story & pictures **Pat Cruywagen**





**I** now live in England but African blood runs through my veins. In nearly 20 years as a 4x4 journalist, I have attended over 10 Defender Trophy events. They are always held in southern Africa, and, as the name suggests, they are for Defenders only. Last year Englishman Phillip Young did it in a Toyota Land Cruiser, but only because he could not get his Defender through customs in time after shipping it over from the UK for the event!

As I exit the OR Tambo arrivals hall in Johannesburg I walk straight into the welcoming hot Highveld air. After a few minutes of waiting, the mother of all Defender 130s appears – it's the Front Runner demo model. It might just be the most-accessorised Defender I've ever seen. Ryno Cloete is behind the wheel, and doing what he does for a living; demonstrating Front Runner products to the world's media. Ryno whips out a packet of biltong and places a cold drink in my hand. "Welcome home, brother," he declares.

Our first stop is the Front Runner factory and world-class showroom at Kyalami. Even though it's a Saturday there are loads of (mostly) Defenders lined up and waiting to get some or other accessory added. Marketing man, Jaco Nel, meets us at the entrance and takes us on a guided tour. The place has expanded tenfold

#### **Above**

The 4x4 track is reason enough to visit the Mapungubwe National Park.

#### **Right**

Driving along the dry riverbeds meant lots of deflating and inflating.

#### **Bottom right**

How many other 4x4 events give participants a free tank of fuel at the start?





since my last visit over a decade ago. Front Runner is one of the big South African 4x4 success stories, with offices and warehouses all over the world.

## DAY 2:

Even though we only have to report for Defender Trophy duty on Monday afternoon, we head off on Sunday morning. I'm in the 130 with Ryno while two of my best mates, Aldri van Jaarsveld and Lindsey Parry, are in a Defender 110 Td5. Aldri has tied a big South African flag to the back of his Land Rover. He is impossible to miss.

We take the N1 toll road north in the direction of Zimbabwe. I have driven this road many times and not much has changed, except the tolls are now more expensive. We cross the Tropic of Capricorn and after about four hours we reach Polokwane, the capital of the Limpopo province. We now take the more rural R521 towards the Limpopo River. The last town we pass through is Alldays, where we top up on ice and other essentials. It's nearly 40 degrees Celsius, so ice is like gold in these parts.

We swap the tar for gravel and head east along the Limpopo River, entering a wildlife area and our home for the next two nights, the Ratho Bush Camp, which is also a working

### Top right

You too could hold a baby croc at the Ratho Bush Camp.

### Below right

The harsh reality is that the camp also is a lucrative business providing croc leather for shoes and other fashion accessories.

### Bottom

It's not often you encounter a more kitted-out Defender than the Front Runner 130.





farm. We are one of the first of the 31 competing Defenders to arrive. Event organiser, Johan Kriek, greets us warmly and tells us to set up camp in a dry section of the Limpopo River.

Before I can put up my Front Runner pop-up tent, Ryno passes me the first of many cold beers. The sun forms a blazing orange ball and slowly slips behind some baobab trees. A herd of impala nervously cross the river about 200 metres away from us.

It gets dark quickly and so we make a fire. Ryno expertly braais some lamb chops and boerewors, the single malt whisky flows and shooting stars entertain us further.

I have left my head torch in my tent and walk the 50 or so metres from the braai area to go fetch it. I hear a snarl behind a rock or log, which makes me nervous. I walk backwards towards the fire and tell the others, but they just mock me and say I have been in the UK too long. One of the event sponsors, Johan Fouche, then

grabs a searchlight and walks with me. Straight away we see the yellow eyes of a lioness who is hiding behind a large log. This is not good. Johan carries on walking towards her. She jumps up and scurries away. I decide it's time for bed.

### DAY 3:

As we have a day without driving, we take in some tourist activities. First up is a croc farm tour. There are around 10 000 crocodiles at the Ratho Bush Camp. Each year they sell 2 500 croc skins to, mainly Italian and Korean, buyers at an average price of US \$200. It's a pretty lucrative business. The most impressive part of the tour are the large breeding crocs.

As my son is mad about crocs I buy him a real crocodile skull. Later in the afternoon, we head out on a game drive with a local guide. We see impala, kudu, elephant, and some nervous warthog, but no sign of the lioness from last night.

### Below left

The competitors had access to some pretty special private areas.

### Below right

Enjoying a sundowner at the Ratho Bush Camp.

### Bottom left

Orange is definitely the new black if you're Dutch.

### Bottom right

Mexican Jesus Saiz was definitely one of the friendliest guys on the Trophy.







By the time we get back from our drive, most of the competitors have arrived and have put the event decals onto their Defenders. Even though we have so many Defenders, no two are the same.

Tonight is a slightly more civilised affair as I catch up with Defender friends that I have not seen for years. Dara King, from Tuff-Trek in the UK, is also here on his first Defender Trophy. He is a guest of Bundutec, the headline sponsors. There is also a Dutch family who are on their second Defender Trophy.

#### DAY 4:

We're up at sunrise, as today is the first official day of the 2019 Defender Trophy. Before leaving, Oldrich van Schalkwyk, from the Endangered Wildlife Trust, talks to us about the need to create wildlife corridors for the free movement of animals. He goes on to say that we are currently in an area which is home to one of the last free-roaming groups of lions in the world. I can confirm this. Oldrich talks for about 45 minutes and I look forward to seeing how the various wildlife authorities from the countries we will be travelling through work together to facilitate the free movement of wildlife.

Johan has obtained special permission for us to enter the Mapungubwe National Park via one

#### Above

Is there anything more impressive than a convoy of Defenders? We don't think so...

#### Top right

Wildlife spotting.

#### Bottom right

Defender owners love comparing set-ups and kit. My awning is bigger than yours...







of the rangers' gates, which takes us to the less-touristy eastern side of the park. Mapungubwe is best known as the former home of an Ancient African Kingdom from over 700 years ago. Evidence of this kingdom was found in the form of a golden rhino excavated here by archaeologists.

We exchange the gravel tracks for the rocky trails of the Rhino Eco Trail, which snakes its way through the red sandstone kopjes of the park. Ryno engages low range and our beast purrs forward in second and third gear.

Each day teams are given a questionnaire with loads of interesting questions about the area we are driving through. These will be marked and the points tallied up to determine the eventual winner of the event.

We leave the rocky trail and join the game track that runs alongside the Limpopo River. Where there is water there are animals and we now see loads of wildlife along this section of the route, including elephant, bushbuck, impala, kudu, giraffes, elephants, and baboons.

While it feels as if we have the park all to ourselves, thanks to the unique 4x4 tracks we have been driving, Johan does allow for a stop at the touristy viewpoints. At one point, we are able to gaze over the confluence of the Sashe and Limpopo rivers. It's one of the most magnificent views in all of the Limpopo Province. As we leave the viewing area our progress is halted by a herd of elephants having a feed. They have loads of youngsters with them, so we give them a wide berth.

Near our campsite for the night, we're met by Stefan Cilliers, the senior section ranger in Mapungubwe National Park. Despite the fact that he doesn't drive a Land Rover, Stefan is a rather remarkable man. During the last nine years, he has helped to reduce rhino poaching in his area to zero. He and his team have collected 1 187 animal snares in that time and also arrested 113 suspects. After a fascinating day, once again we sleep in the dry Limpopo riverbed.

**Top left**  
Follow the Defender with the fuel and water.

**Top right**  
Nothing like a natter and one for the road during the lunch stop.

**Above left**  
No fuel in Zimbabwe? Fire up the donkey cart!

**Above right**  
Crossing from SA into Zim was a muddy affair.



**DAY 5:**

We wake up to a temporary border post that has been set up by the South African authorities only a few metres from our campsite. They are from the nearby Pontdrift Border Post, which is the most northern border post between South Africa and Botswana. They efficiently stamp us out of SA, then we drive for about one kilometre in a westerly direction. There is a huge welcome party consisting of Zimbabwean officials from just about every government department, including the secret police. They take great interest in me because I am a British journalist and seem disappointed that I have pre-arranged my media accreditation from the Zimbabwe Media Commission. In fact, Nothando Moyo has come all the way from Harare, a distance of 700km, to personally issue it to me. The convoy's paperwork takes about two hours to complete. While this is going on Nick Smart, a Defender Trophy veteran helps to recover the bogged-down truck of one of the officials.

Some clever entrepreneur has been informed about our visit and he has set up a stand selling baobab juices. He even has promo girls to help with the tasting. I try some. It's not for me. Others buy bottles by the dozens.

**Top right**

The team from Holland have now done two trophies in a row.

**Right**

It was great to see park officials from three different countries working together to combat poaching.

**Bottom**

The flags in Zimbabwe have been at half-mast since Mugabe came into power in the 80s.







#### **Above**

Every night we either camped in a dry riverbed or else at a river confluence.

#### **Left**

This is why YOU need to do the Defender Trophy: wildlife aplenty.



We make our way to the Sashi Primary school, which is about a 45-minute drive away along very dry and dusty roads. The place is in dire need of rain. Hundreds of school kids are waiting for us. Nick has raised about R6 000 for the school after selling some cloth Defender Trophy badges. Everyone else is carrying much-needed equipment for the school. Brett Ellis has made a special wooden box full of sporting equipment for the kids. The whole village has come to see what the fuss is about. It's definitely one of the highlights of the event, giving back to those who have so little.

We have lunch at a nearby Hunters Lodge and then take a trip to what remains of an old fort. The entourage of officials are still with us and explain the history of the area to us.

Then it's time to deflate tyres again as we drive up the dry Sashe River for 25km. Botswana is now to our left. The only people we see during this sandy slog are some fishermen and herdsman. Our original plan was to camp where the Sashe and Tuli meet, but the area is very exposed and the wind is strong. Instead, we set up camp in sheltered spot a kilometre or two away. Our day in Zim has been long but memorable.



**DAY 6:**

After packing up camp, which takes about an hour, there is a driver's briefing and then we arrange all the Defenders abreast for a drone shot as they drive together up the dry river bed. After about 15km we arrive at the small Mlambapele border post; time to clock out of Zimbabwe and into Botswana at the adjoining Mabolwe border post. By now we are running low on beer and so we make our way to the village of Semolale, where we top up on St Louis, Botswana's finest and only beer.

From here we head south towards the Tuli Block and enter the Northern Tuli Game Reserve. Suddenly we start to see more and more signs of wildlife. Elephant dung and damaged trees are everywhere. Once we enter the Mashatu Game Reserve we see loads of wildlife. There are elephants, giraffe, or impala around every turn. As we head back into the dry riverbeds we have to stop to deflate tyres again. Some try and advance without deflating and get stuck, of course. Just as the sun starts to set we reach the confluence of the Sashe and Limpopo rivers.

My final night on the Defender Trophy is spent camping where not only three countries meet, but also where wildlife can roam free

across international borders. The way it should be, without having to worry about being poached or shot for the pot. That night the braai fires burn long into the night and Defender war stories are exchanged. These are my people and some of my best mates. Like me, they love Defenders and wilderness areas. It's why I keep on coming back.

**FINAL DAY:**

Unfortunately I cannot hang around for the last day and prize-giving as I have to get back to the UK. It takes the best part of a day to cross the Botswana border and drive through to OR Tambo airport, in Gauteng. I make my flight with minutes to spare. When we touch down the next morning to London's dull early morning light, I find the sands of the Sashe River are still in my boots. The Defender Trophy; it's the real deal ●

**Below left**

Our friendly guards kept lookout when we were camping in Zimbabwe.

**Below right**

The incredible Stiebel family were the deserved winners.

**FIND OUT MORE**

Want to do the 2020 Defender Trophy or something similar in Classic Land Rovers? See [www.defendertrophy.com](http://www.defendertrophy.com) or email Johan Kriek on [admin@defendertrophy.com](mailto:admin@defendertrophy.com).







Mafuta, the Bell family's Defender 130 on the road.

**Below** a modified Disco makes it through a mud hole – definitely an 'Offroader' at the wheel.

# The difference between an Overlander and an Offroader

A very important distinction needs to be made between the offroader and the overland traveller; often the two are thought to be the same. An offroader uses his vehicle, usually highly modified and not his daily driver, for recreational purposes and perhaps the odd holiday where he will venture into the realm of the overlander for a while. His priority is to test the limitations and endurance of

both himself and his vehicle either in designated 4x4 areas or on a round trip to an adventure destination where he will rely on the vehicle to take him to remote places over difficult terrain. The offroader has nerves of steel. The overlander's objective is adventure travel over vastly changing terrain while testing his own courage and resourcefulness and the vehicle's endurance and reliability, all while maintaining some degree of comfort, usually over an

extended period of time. Not all overlanders like to drive far from the beaten track and many will never exploit the off-road capabilities of their vehicles. There is nothing wrong with this way of travel. Many places we have been are accessible by a well-driven, unloved sedan. If you are an offroader who intends to become an overlander, you

will have a fantastic journey if you are willing to adapt your mindset by carefully considering your long-term travel needs. There is a German I never met who toured Central South America at the same time we were there (the first time around). We had mutual friends so the rumours we heard were fresh. He





## THE BELL FAMILY STORY

The Bell family has been overlanding the planet continuously since 2012 in a Land Rover Defender 130, known affectionately as Mafuta.

We have home-schooled our children (Keelan, 20 and Jessica, 15), have written three books about our journey and international overland travel and are determined to explore the planet by whatever means possible, immersing ourselves into the cultures, languages, and countries we visit.

This journey is the greatest challenge we have ever faced. We live hand-to-mouth and invest every cent we earn in this dream of overlanding the planet – until old age stops us in our tracks. We do not live by a schedule and travel spontaneously, going where the road takes us with only a distant destination as a geographic goal.

Since 2010, and over 250 000 kilometers, we and our trusty Land Rover have explored southern and East Africa, have circumnavigated South America, and drove from Argentina to Alaska before touring North America extensively.

The family then drove across the USA, and together, over three months of blood, sweat, and tears, converted the Defender into an off-road camper with accommodation for four adults and capable of taking on the planet's most challenging terrain.

In early 2017 the Land Rover was shipped to the United Kingdom and the family began a journey around Europe and to Asia Minor (Turkey).

In late 2018 we began a trans-Africa journey from Morocco to South Africa along the volatile West African coast.

Our adventures are documented in bi-monthly episodes on our Patreon channel – A2A Expedition. [www.patreon.com/a2aexpedition](http://www.patreon.com/a2aexpedition)

### You can find us on:

Instagram: [graeme.r.bell](https://www.instagram.com/graeme.r.bell)

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Website: [www.a2aexpedition.com](http://www.a2aexpedition.com)



Parked up at a tropical campsite after a long day on the road. The perfect overland scenario.

drove a custom modified Pinzgauer-based vehicle which resembled a lunar landing pod with wheels. The dashboard and ceiling of the driver's cab was equipped with knobs and dials and switches, lights that flashed and gauges to inform of the pressure, fluid level, heat, and health of every bloody moving part. Antenna swayed above the vehicle and a satellite dish jutted out the side of the living quarters. He had upgraded almost every part and had installed an electrical system which would baffle most electrical engineers. The thing had six driven wheels, portal axles, lockers on each differential, self-inflating tyres, you name it.

It probably cost more than I have ever earned or spent, and I started working when I was 14. Problem was, the thing hardly ever worked. The electrical system would crash frequently and the highly-tuned engine ate the gearbox and pooped out

the clutch. Twice he had to have a technician and a huge crate of spare parts flown in from some spotless Swiss workshop. Those mechanical problems were undoubtedly an inconvenience and very, very frustrating, but we are going to assume that Herr. Otto had a huge pile of Euros under his bed back home in Bavaria. The rub was that though the vehicle was designed to be highly competent off road it was unreliable and therefore unlikely to leave the hard top for any significant periods of time.

Contrary to popular belief many overlanders are not able to afford either the over-the-top rig or the associated costs. If you are going to travel around the world in a 4x4, or any vehicle, you want to live by that old corporate chestnut: KISS, or Keep It Simple Stupid. No doubt when planning to outfit your vehicle you will spend countless hours on the





The weatherproof body on this Defender kept a clever friend safe and secure during the worst weather. Good overlanding sense.

**Below** Another modified Disco, somewhere midway on the 4x4 user spectrum.

web and attending outdoor shows where gleaming hardware and all manner of camouflage-strapped solar-powered water filtration air beds will coax the hard-earned cash right out of your pants. That burly, khaki-clad salesman who once drove a fully-kitted Toyota to Outdoor Warehouse, on a particularly wet and windy day, will convince you that you should not even consider leaving home without the rock sliders, the custom roof rack, the full-length LED light bar, and the three extra fuel and water tanks (including the latest-generation, NASA-designed pumps installed by his workshop), all while they







View over the bullbar. Inspired by the road ahead and all it may bring.

drill in a cast-iron drawer system, a full lighting system, a bar, two fridges, military-grade underbody protection, 40-inch tyres and all the associated upgrades to the running gear and electrical system. All of that is great if you plan to use the vehicle to impress your mates and a busty girl every second weekend, and once a year for a run to Namibia, but maybe not so great when you are planning to be a long-term traveller.

The focus when modifying a vehicle for overlanding should be on comfort and everyday useability. You want to be dry when it is raining, warm when it is snowing or ice cold, cool in a heat wave, protected from the wind with the ability to store and prepare food under all those conditions and sleep well at night, safe from bugs and predators, both two- and four-legged.

Recently we were camping in a desert with a leak of Defender drivers when a small sandstorm blew through camp all night.

Everyone was miserable except for the genius who had put an ambulance body on his Defender and our family which could sleep in a tent through a tornado. Said genius (he really is a genius, a rock climbing PanAm vet who manages a team researching paediatric cancer) was warm and clean and safe behind insulated walls. He had sleeping space for two and could cook inside or outside the vehicle. He had one-way blacked-out windows for privacy, vents for ventilation and fans to cool the interior. The roof housed solar panels and

surfboards, and had space for climbing gear or kayaks. Inside he had storage space for more than he needed and a large, lockable safe for cameras and other expensive technology as well as external storage boxes built into the ambulance body's cavities. I spent a day with him driving some low-range routes in the surrounding mountains and was impressed that the Defender's off-road capabilities were not hindered at all. I was envious. The cherry on the cake was that he had spent the equivalent of the price of

a new rooftop tent on the conversion, but, being a genius, he had created that bit of luck.

Our advice to anyone planning a long-term overland journey is to first consider their particular style of travel and their own capabilities and requirements. If you like to get out there in the tough stuff and machete your way through a jungle then you will need a vehicle equipped to be as tough as you are. If you prefer a gentle cruise with a bit of off-piste driving and camping thrown in then you will need a vehicle better suited to that style of travel. You will save a ton of money by investing in the vehicle which is best suited to your style of travel. How do you discover your style? Get out there and do it! Take whichever vehicle you have and go for a long drive, explore, meet other travellers, and study their rigs. Only then will you know what is right for you. ●

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# GREAT ZOOKS!



Jack Russell heads  
for the clouds on  
Baboon's Pass.



## There are a few mishaps as a bunch of Jimnys tackle one of Lesotho's premier off-road challenges, Baboon's Pass

Story & pictures **Adam Alcock**

**C**all it the Mountain Kingdom, or the Switzerland of Africa. These are all well-earned nicknames for Lesotho, as its dramatic peaks and remote highlands are difficult to traverse on foot, let alone by wheeled transport. So it's no surprise Lesotho offers some of southern Africa's most impressive off-roading trails.

The still untarred Sani Pass is perhaps the best known. But tucked away high in the Maseru district is Baboon's Pass, another of Lesotho's especially demanding 'roads'. It's known as a car breaker for good reason. *(Just ask Anton Willemse, who drove it and reported on his experience in our June 2019 issue. – Ed)* This 26-kilometre pass has gained notoriety for pushing both driver and 4x4 to the limit. Nevertheless, in a series of events that can only be described as an epic adventure, a group of 13 adrenaline junkies attempted to conquer this beast of a challenge. The difference this time was that most of the convoy would be made up of little Suzuki Jimnys.

### The planning

Six months of planning went into this arduous journey up the mountain pass. The first steps were to put together a team of off-roading gurus, and a few enthusiastic tagalongs, map out a route and get the vehicles properly serviced and modified to cope with the conditions.

Altogether, the convoy was to be made up of four Suzuki Jimnys (dubbed Trapsuutjie, Kerneels, Jack Russel, and Nomad), a Suzuki motocross bike (codenamed II), a Land Rover Defender (Lily), and two Jeep Wranglers (known as Bumblebee and Carlos).

Plans seemed to be on schedule, apart from Lily's clutch failing and being quickly repaired just two weeks before the event. There was also the problem of Nomad's much-needed lifter kit, which of course did not arrive until the night before departure.





The convoy strung out in the relatively easy first section of Baboon's Pass, with the mountains behind. The Pass is only 26km long, but is no walk in the park.

The team now faced a dilemma: let sleeping dogs lie and risk seriously damaging Nomad later on Baboon's Pass or take a chance and do a full-body lift only hours before the convoy hit the road? The temptation of the kit proved too great, so it was all hands on deck to give Nomad a boost. Several hours and countless profanities later a distress signal went out that only the front of Nomad had been raised. Nomad had to drive for reinforcements in full squat mode, dazzling passing motorists with its headlamps that were now better suited for spotting air raids. This was 04:00 on D-Day, Friday the 13th as it so happened.

With only two hours sleep for the drivers who had managed to sort out Nomad's rear suspension, the group seemed all set – until a second call for aid from team Carlos. He, as it turned out, had also spent all night tinkering with the gearing in the Jeep Wrangler's differential. With dire consequences. Unfortunately, the repairs were too great for our

tight schedule and a rescue party was sent to pick up the stranded drivers.

We bid farewell to our fallen soldier as we continued onwards to the border where the third and fourth unfortunate events were waiting for us.

Thinking the worst was over, at the border we discovered there were no registration papers for Lily the Landy and one of the passengers had brought his son's passport instead of his own. While it was feasible to organise a copy of the registration papers for Lily in a town nearby, we thought it slightly optimistic for a fully-grown man to pass off as his teenage son.

It was agreed that a team would peel off to retrieve the passport and meet up with the rest of the convoy the next morning. We finally made it to Ramabanta Trading Post in time for sundowners, a quick braai, and then straight to bed. With no cell phone signal, all we could do was hope that the team who had turned back earlier would arrive in time.



## Out of Ramabanta

A rested team woke the next day to a welcome sight – the members who had turned back earlier had arrived and the reunited group assembled in the restaurant for breakfast and a quick debriefing.

The plan was for team leader, Andries, to head the convoy in Trapsuutjie, followed by the other three Jimnys, with the Jeep and Land Rover bringing up the rear. This Axis vs Allied arrangement was deemed essential as the heavier vehicles, we figured, had the power to pull each other out of trouble if need be, without having to lash together all four Jimnys like sledge dogs.

With well wishes from the staff at Ramabanta, we set off for Baboon's Pass, savouring the last few kilometres of tarred road. We stopped on the bridge just before the official start of the trail to do some last-minute cross-checks and to deflate our tyres to more appropriate rock-climbing pressures.

The first leg of the trail was manoeuvred with relative ease, only having to stop on occasion to pack rocks and shift boulders. You could tell that both drivers and passengers were in their element as even when the slightest of obstacles had presented itself, each was eager to give a detailed breakdown of what the problem was and how to solve it.

This level of expertise proved effective as we reached the halfway point for day one in a matter of hours, where we stopped for a quick 10:00 refreshment. That said, as the day wore on, the battering from the track began to take its toll on the cars, especially Jack Russel whose already knackered clutch was, to put it lightly, "Beginning to go."

However, the slow deterioration of Jack Russel's clutch was nothing compared to the disaster that had occurred up ahead. We caught up to the head of the pack and found a stationary Trapsuutjie with Andries' two legs poking out from underneath. Not a good sign.

A broken-hearted Andries informed us that Trapsuutjie had lost its footing and landed heavily on one of the radial arms, shearing it right off. Anyone with a bit of mechanical knowledge will know this is a serious fix, even more so in less-than-ideal circumstances.

While the rest of the team went ahead to make camp, those left attending to Trapsuutjie came up with an ingenious solution to fix the broken radial arm. In the true spirit of 'tis but a scratch' the team used a ratchet strap to draw the radial arm back and secure it in the correct position. A battered, but not beaten, Trapsuutjie then re-joined the rest of the group at the campsite.

Setting up camp is made difficult by the cold and the wind, but this is an adventure, after all. The shopping bag shoe solution demonstrated here by Andries had its own back story.





### Night camp

With light fading and temperatures dropping fast, it was a scramble to set up the tents, start a fire, and get dinner on the go. Our team leader-turned-braai master had some more tricks up his sleeve. He removed the metal cover from his spare wheel, which turned out to be a custom-made braai grid. He then unlatched a hidden cabinet mounted on Trapsuutjie's rear door to reveal a drop-down cutting board and spice rack that would rival any gourmet kitchen. Clearly, not even an isolated mountain pass 2 689m above sea level was going to get in the way of Andries and his braai.

With the crisis of Trapsuutjie's radial arm quickly put behind us, the mood around the campfire turned festive. The group was relaying events of the day, adding considerable spice, and discussing the performance of each of their vehicles. The affectionate way each of these gentlemen talked about their cars would make any listener think they had brought along their wives or girlfriends (if only their vehicles were as practical). A two-litre bottle of sherry was cracked open and served

as the camper's version of antifreeze. The bottle seemed to have sprung a leak in the hands of the more senior off-roaders because it seemed to never quite make it all the way down to where the younger members were seated.

To say that we woke the next morning implies that we did in fact sleep. In reality, a single sleeping bag beneath a measly nylon layer of tent didn't quite cut it when it came to keeping the cold out. Most of us were up well before sunrise, huddling around the remaining embers from the previous night's fire. Hearing an incessant rustling sound in the background, it was hard not to notice Andries emerging from his tent sporting some extremely fashionable plastic bags on his feet.

What was first assumed to be a survival hack for keeping feet warm, turned out to be a poor substitute for his absent shoes. A quick inspection of the campsite revealed that Andries' shoes were not the only items missing from the campsite. A gas bottle and one of the team member's clothing bags – which contained his wallet, complete with bank cards and driver's licence – were amongst the missing items. As unfortunate as this situation

Nomad gives it horns. The combination of steep climbs and a short wheelbase made for some dramatic jumps.







was, the team didn't let it put a damper on the remainder of the trip. After a quick pack up of camp, we set off for round two.

### Toughing it out

The second leg of the pass proved to be significantly tougher and more strenuous than the first. The 4x4s, drivers, and spotters were all put through their paces in an effort to navigate large boulders and sheer rock faces that offered little traction.

Progress was extremely slow, especially at one notoriously difficult gully, which took most of the morning to conquer. When we reached the top of the gully, we were met with one of the most bizarre sights we had encountered on our trip – bearing in mind we just witnessed Nomad having to be pinned down by several men after an all but vertical take-off during the ascent.

Placed deliberately on a rock in the middle of our route was the entire contents of the wallet that had been taken the night before. No-one could quite believe that the person who had taken basic equipment at the campsite had made the effort to return items that were useless to them but hugely important to the owner, rather than thoughtlessly discarding them. Humbled by this gesture, it was onwards and upwards.

Despite all the battering the 4x4s had taken over the past day and a half they showed no sign of tiring. You could sense the vehicles were as eager as we were to successfully complete the Baboon's Pass challenge. It certainly seemed that we would all reach the end without anyone having to be towed, right up until the moment Lily slipped into a protruding rock that wedged itself into the rim and punctured the valve.

**Top left** Guiding Nomad through a difficult section. This is not a drive you want to do without a spotter on hand.

**Top right** Winching out the offending stone so Lily the Landy could get on her way.

**Above left** A decent thief – essential cards left behind.

**Above right** Boer maak 'n plan fix on Trapsuutjie's radial arm. It worked.



Miraculously, the rock had completely missed the tyre wall but nevertheless left Lily sitting on her rim.

In a situation where failure is not an option, teams Lily, Jack Russel, and Bumblebee used the three most important tools in any bush mechanic's arsenal (duct tape, cable ties, and a potent Afrikaner gene) to temporarily fix Lily's tyre.

The rock that had caused all the trouble in the first place then had to be tactfully removed to prevent it from slashing the tyre wall. Unable to lift the rock using manpower, a snatch rope was wrapped around the rock and hitched up to Jack Russel. With a quick but decisive tug, Lily was free to move.

The team that had fallen behind to rescue Lily, caught up with the rest of the convoy at the appropriately-named Goliath's Rock. With bated breath, Lily tried to manoeuvre into position to tackle the obstacle. Tried being the operative word as, ironically, it was not the actual rock, but the tight left-hander that proved tighter than the Landy's infamously-wide turning circle. It was Bumblebee, however, who really stole the show at Goliath's Rock. Its unbelievable power and torque allowed it to just amble over what was, quite frankly, a small cliff. One last push and we made it to the highest point of the pass where the spectacular 360-degree view provided an excellent backdrop for a victory team photo.





### Not quite over

All things considered, the vehicles in the convoy managed to successfully scale the mountain pass on their own steam, albeit while having a few egos humbled along the way. Baboon's Pass had not only lived up to its reputation but exceeded our expectations. I think I speak for everyone when I say that this was, hands down, one of the most incredible and unforgettable trips we had been on.

That being said, it is indeed not for the inexperienced off-roader nor for the faint of heart. It takes a great deal of skill and ingenuity to undertake such a challenge, a good sense of humour, and no shortage of patience.

The success or failure of such a trip is also largely determined by the people you are with, especially since it's not a question of if but rather when and where problems will occur. Our team consisted of a group of truly great, fun-loving lads who made the trip that much more enjoyable.

After a heartfelt farewell, we departed from Ramabanta and set a course home. Except for Trapsuutjie, who scheduled one last breakdown before entering South Africa. In the middle of a rural village, Kerneels, from Zooke spares had to whip out an extra differential – as one does – and he did a record-breaking repair. •

**Opposite page** The Jeep named Bumblebee, with its big tyres, slightly longer wheelbase and big lift, was well suited to the terrain.

**This page, below** The convoy poses at the final crest of the Pass – a deserved victory.

**Bottom** Spotters and photographers enjoying the clear air of Lesotho, and the endless vistas all around.





Purge slugs and snails before eating by soaking in salt water.

# Chewy, but edible

## Take another look at those garden pests

Words & pictures **Paul Donovan**

**T**he French eat them in great numbers but few other people are quite as adventurous. What am I talking about eating?

Slugs, of course.

I have written a few articles extolling the virtues of bush tucker because it's plentiful and easy to find. But not everyone may be motivated enough to eat crickets, locusts, and other creepy crawlies. However, slugs and snails are a bit different, because they more resemble limpets or whelks. So if you have a liking for seafood, you won't find them too unpalatable.

Slugs (which are essentially snails without their shells) and snails are a rich source of nutrients, for they are high

in both protein and minerals. Also, because they are easy to source (in most locations) and prepare, they make one of the best survival foods.

### Slugs

I am sure the gardeners amongst us will be familiar with this creature. These 'homeless' gastropods, typified by their black rubber-like bodies covered in a mucous coating, live mainly in the soil and wreak havoc in gardens. Their mouth has a rasp-like radula (tongue) and chitinated jaw, which they use to munch through succulent green plants. Slugs will also eat carrion and fungi.

Although generally regarded as being shell-less, many slug species do have a reduced internal shell.

One such species is the earthworm-eating slug of the family Testacellidae. The two remaining slug groups are called Roundbacks and Keeled slugs.

Roundbacks, such as the common garden slug, have dome-shaped bodies, while Keeled slugs have a keel, or ridge running along their back. The Keeled slugs are the larger members, reaching anywhere up to 20-23cm in length.

The retractable tentacles on the head are the organs by which the slug smells, making them able to detect food several metres away.

### Snails

Shelled gastropod molluscs occur in the oceans, in freshwater, and on land.

Those that have lost their gills and breathe air are the easiest to identify and, in respect of this article, are typically the most important to us.

The snail's shell is essentially made from calcium and is a hollow cone shape spiralling around a hollow central column. Their body is in a bag-like structure with only the head and 'foot' visible at any one time.

In effect, the head is an extension of the foot and identified by two pairs of tentacles. The mucous coating, left by the foot, acts as a lubricant to enable the animal to move easily over surfaces.

Like slugs, snails also have a radula tongue for rasping away at tender young





A slug is just a snail without a shell.



Avoid individuals that are eating fungi or poisonous plants.



Restaurant or bush – the only difference is the price.

plants, making them a great nuisance to the green-fingered gardeners amongst us. Although essentially vegetarian, some snails are carnivorous and feed on earthworms and even other snails.

### Collecting

It should go without saying, only living slugs and snails should be harvested. Any that smell bad should be discarded. Do not assume that a snail that is not moving is dead. Generally, snails are nocturnal and sleep during the day.

Hibernating snails can also be eaten, providing the seal around the shell entrance is intact and not receding; receding seals are an indication that the snail is either dead or in the last throes of life.

Avoid collecting individuals which are feeding on, or are in the local area of, poisonous plants or fungi. Slugs and snails can process the toxins in these plants/fungi, but if we were to eat the slug/snail it could cause us serious problems. Cooking does not always render the individual harmless.

### How to cook them

The traditional way of cooking snails is to boil them in water and eat them like limpets and mussels. However, they can also be cooked in the embers of a fire or even fried. Whatever you do, do NOT eat them raw.

Although the snails you may find in the wild will be smaller than the large white snail (Gros blanch) eaten in France, the snail inside the shell is almost the same size. And, I must admit, better tasting.

All slugs and snails should have their stomachs purged

to remove anybody waste or any toxic plant compounds present. As I have mentioned, both are likely to eat plants which are harmless to them, but dangerous to us.

Purging can be achieved by either soaking the animal in salty water for about 24 hours or feeding them a diet of harmless plants or bread crumbs. If you can source a strong herb, purge them on this as it will infuse into their flesh and give them a more palatable taste.

To cook slugs and snails, plunge them in boiling water and boil for eight to 10 minutes. Be careful not to put too many in the pot at a time, as the water tends to froth up and will spill over. The frothing is caused by the slime the slug/snail produces, often as a result of it being removed from its natural environment.

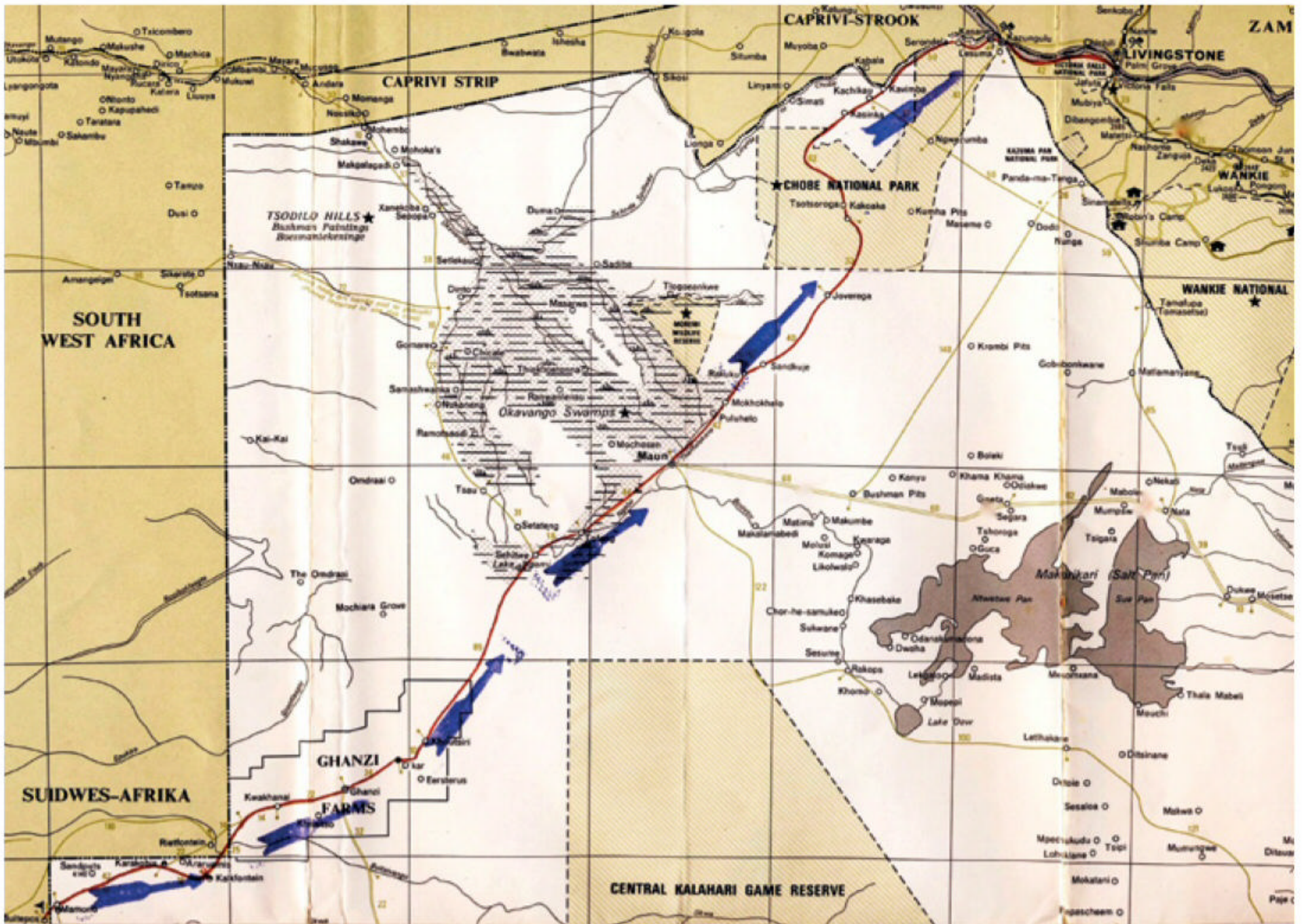
Taste can be enhanced by adding a strong herb such as wild garlic or mint. The foot itself may be slightly rubbery, but the rest of the snail is quite soft and tender.

Another way of cooking snails and slugs is to wrap them in a non-toxic leaf with a few herbs and a drop of water. Cover the leaf in wet mud and cook in hot coals for 10 to 12 minutes, depending on the number and size of snails. Because the snails are cooked in their own juices, they don't lose that 'meaty' taste as they do with boiling.

### Tail-end

If you want a gradual introduction to eating bush food, slugs and snails may be the answer. Granted, they can be a bit like chewing a piece of rubber but are very palatable. And just imagine how much you would be paying for them in a swanky restaurant. ●





The AA map with the original 1970 travel route.

# BOTSWANA

## *then & now*

Reader Jürgen Hönsch describes an epic trip into the heartland of Botswana 50 years ago, in an entirely unsuitable vehicle. Next month, he describes the same trip in a Mitsubishi Pajero Sport...

Story Jürgen Hönsch



**T**ravelling and exploring what lies beyond the horizon has been in my DNA for as long as I can remember.

These adventures have taken me to many wild and wonderful places on the four continents where I have worked and lived.

Off-roading was an early attraction, as it provided the tool for conquering the great outdoors but I had to wait until 1975 when I could afford my own 4x4 – a 40 Series Toyota Land Cruiser, which I bought ‘out of the box’ when in the Americas.

I’ve often been asked which trip among my many travels across the globe was ‘the most memorable’. This had to be a crossing of the Kalahari in 1970, in a half-tonner Toyota Corona bakkie that had no place driving on the roads of the time.

In this two-part article, I talk first about that early trip into Botswana, and then, next month, my experience 50 years later covering much the same route using a capable 4x4 (Mitsubishi Pajero Sport) in what has become a far more civilised country.

### Borders & signboards

The story starts on Wednesday the 15th of April 1970 when we crossed into Botswana at the Buitepos/Mamono border post. Scared up from his extended lunch break, a sleepy border official finally appeared and raised the boom. There was no request for visas; only

passports and firearms were asked for. After he had registered our 9mm pistols he placed his forefinger into a barrel with a grin on his face. There was no stamp pad so he had to improvise by pouring ink onto a folded newspaper and then did some practising before he finally stamped our passports. “You must report at the Ghanzi police station,” he said, and we left... much relieved and in a hurry.

The British Embassy in Cape Town had refused us visas for Botswana due to alleged cross-border raids at the time. Nevertheless, we embarked upon our safari without any such documents, and 30 days and 7 500 miles later we were back in the Cape without having experienced any problems in this regard.

Prior to this we had crisscrossed the old Southwest Africa and enjoyed every minute of it, and were now ready to tackle the great unknown head-on. But when we arrived at our friend’s farm and told him about the planned tour along the Okavango Delta and further on into Rhodesia, he shook his head and put our disrespect of the Kalahari somewhat into place. He insisted that we see his school friend, Rory, from Zimmer Safaris in Windhoek for some first-hand advice about that trail up to Maun. I still remember today some details of that valuable lecture we received on that Wednesday morning from Mr Zimmer (senior), as his son Rory was on the road again. That advice surely contributed to the success of our journey and together

with the experience that followed, it became a solid foundation for my future off-roading and overlanding practice.

But here we were, heading into Botswana, and there it was in black and white, a rusted signboard warning us in no uncertain terms: “HIGH CLEARANCE OR 4-WHEEL DRIVEN VEHICLES ONLY!”

Our vehicle – my friend’s little Toyota Corona 1 200cc mini-bakkie – didn’t qualify on either of the two rules! But we were not greenhorns and, more importantly, we were charged with a healthy portion of determination and adventurous spirit. After all, we had freshly acquired knowledge of how to conquer the Kalahari. But how can you deflate tyres to 20psi without a pressure gauge? We tried our best by deflating, counting, and kicking the tyres and watching their footprints, but it was all guesswork.

Next problem: how can one possibly drive in a track that’s much too wide? Well, with two wheels on the middelmannetjie and the other two in the track, we sort of managed a road driven mainly by large trucks.

The going was tough, but it was a case of ‘Heija safari’, Africa here we come – even if it did become more of a ‘Dorsland trek’.

### Deep sand and a dusty tow

The deep track we were on wound its way through dense mopane woodlands and had a middelmannetjie as high as Table



**Above left** A 1.2-litre, rear-wheel-drive Toyota Corona Mark 1, similar to the one that managed the Kalahari crossing. **Above right** The Botswanan border guard used a folded-up newspaper ‘stamp pad’ to stamp our passports.





**Above left** After a brief thunderstorm, masses of sand and mud clogged up the engine bay when driving. **Above right** Filling up with petrol at the so-called 'filling station' in Toteng.

Mountain. We inched our way through the soft sand, recognising that lack of ground clearance was the hindering factor. Our progress was that of a snail. It was a hot afternoon and we got stuck in the deep sand, again and again, being forced to shift tons of the sands of the Kalahari to extract ourselves.

We switched drivers every two hours, and now it was my turn. Mopane trees and stumps prevented me from driving next to the track, so I continued at a crazy slant, fighting to stay on the track. The Corona was shovelling sand with her front end, and as we had to drive with open windows it became extremely dusty inside the cabin.

After the umpteenth time getting stuck and digging, pushing, and becoming mobile again, we decided to call it a day and pitched our tent next to the road in the mopane forest. A while later, we were surrounded by a number of Herero women in their traditional dress and curious headgear. They came from nowhere and wanted to sell us eggs. Being good neighbours we bought a dozen.

Our belongings were powdered in sand and when I opened a can of Hansa Tafel, I joked that the Kalahari dust had even got inside the can.

During the night we were woken by a strange sound that turned out to be a cow scratching her head on the tent's guy ropes. The following morning, as my friend set about making scrambled eggs for breakfast, he let out a scream: the eggs were rotten and smelly. The Herero women, meanwhile, had returned to sell

more eggs and were faced with a few flying members of the dirty dozen to send them on their way.

During the early morning hours, our progress was reasonable, but we slowed down as temperatures rose and the sand got softer. We were literally ploughing and got stuck repeatedly. Each time we had to remove the sand from around the wheels, level the middleman ahead and behind the Toyota, then compact the sand by driving backwards and forwards. Finally, with a good shove, we would be on our way. Most of the time. But our pace was agonisingly slow.

At one very powdery section of deep sand, we lost momentum and reached deadlock once again. Inspecting the track ahead of us, we had decided to further lower our tyre pressure when we heard the sound of an engine. It turned out to be a Landy driven by a sales representative for a farm supply company. "Where are you heading to? Where are you coming from? Are you Germans?" he asked. And before we could decline his offer he had turned the Landy and his helper had fastened a piece of steel cable somewhere on the Toyota's front axle and off he went through the deep sand with us on a very short tow line.

It was a terrifying experience in that hot and dusty bakkie with zero visibility, being hauled behind the Land Rover. We had to wind up the windows but the dust was everywhere and we coughed like chain smokers. Our rescuer was driving much too fast and the poor Toyota jumped from one side to the other and he went on for miles.

Finally, we came to a standstill. "From

here on you should manage," he said, and he was off before we could offer him a Hansa Tafel.

We stood for a while in disbelief, still recovering from the ordeal and looking at the fading dust of his Landy. Then, of course, we opened a can of beer, which was warm, foamy from being shaken up, and tasted awful. Maybe he knew it!

From there on to Ghanzi was much less of a struggle.

A fortnight later, the same salesman turned up at our friend's farm and told Siegfried the story about two bloody Germans who he gave a tow in the middle of nowhere. "They tried to cross the Kalahari in a little pick-up truck that had no ground clearance whatsoever. For sure, they must be biltong by now!"

Well, we had a good laugh when Siegfried later told us that story.

### **In a pickle in Ghanzi**

At the filling station in Ghanzi, we discovered that our tyre pressure was still much too high, but reasonably equal all round. Meanwhile, I used compressed air to clean my brand-new, and now very dusty, Swiss Bolex Super-8 film camera. Willie also topped up our water container and was assured it was good for drinking. Then, as requested – and being the good citizens that we were – our next stop was a visit to the Station Commander of the Kalahari Metropolis.

We were greeted by a middle-aged and very British-looking police officer, who fitted better in a Hollywood movie. After inspecting our little Toyota, he



told us in no uncertain terms that we had no right to be in Botswana with our car and should return at once to wherever we had come from.

He gave our trusty little Toyota a name my friend didn't like at all and, not being in a very good mood after the day's ordeal, my friend replied that the road ahead could not be worse and nothing, and nobody, would stop us from going forward. Things were not going well.

So we moved on to the pub, clearly a popular watering hole filled with some friendly, thirsty customers. We were questioned on our whereabouts and, after we told them about our unfortunate encounter with the local authority, they started laughing.

"You know what you guys must do," they advised, "buy him a drink or two when he arrives here in about half-an-hour, and you'll get your free passage!"

And 'wragtig', the half-hour wasn't even up before he walked in through the door and everything went according to that prediction!

The friendly people also gave us some advice about how to deal with the road ahead but warned that the supply truck only came through that way once a week, so we had to be fully self-sufficient for at least that period of time.

A Barclays Bank employee, who had done the trip down from Maun a fortnight before in his Jeep Wagoneer, warned us that the road turned into three tracks in deep sand at the approach to the Veterinary Fence, and only one of the tracks was safe to drive. Well, when we later arrived at that place I was the driver and missed the 'safe turn-off', but with momentum and good luck we managed to get through after all.

We stayed over at the Ghanzi Hotel that night and very much enjoyed taking a shower after all that dust. After a good rest and breakfast, and now with the correct tyre pressure, what could possibly go wrong?

In good spirits, we started the new day – although it wasn't far out of Ghanzi when we experienced a blowout. Willie was driving much too fast and had failed to avoid a limestone outcrop. We changed the wheel and returned to Ghanzi, but were unable to buy a new tyre of that size. A thick strip of rubber inlay was the second-best solution and that tyre now had to serve as a spare.

After that wake-up call, we slowed down to a safe speed and concentrated on the road ahead of us. This really was the road to hell: endless, dusty, and hot! During the morning hours, we made reasonable progress, regularly changing

drivers as advised by Mr Zimmer. Our eyes became sore and red from the dust and glaring sun, and our necks stiff from the strain of concentrating to avoid getting stuck again.

In Ghanzi, I discovered that my Bolex was not managing the dust very well, so I was forced to wrap it in a few layers of plastic to keep it from an early, sandy grave. I lived to regret this choice, as there is no footage at all from that eventful day.

### **A looming water crisis**

We had an evaporative cooler bag hanging from the front of the Toyota, as one did in those days. The water was cool, even if it tasted brackish, and we topped it up every time we stopped for a drink. Disaster struck when we noticed the bag was perforated and all the cool water had gone. What followed was a long, tiring afternoon of hard labour and sweat to get through that hot sand – with no cool water for relief.

At the Veterinary fence, where the road branched off, the road was more like a sand quarry. The Toyota's little wheels struggled with this but with concentration, good momentum, and a little luck, we managed to get through in a big cloud of dust. At other places, we were not so lucky and had to dig, push, jack up the car, and build roads to get through – all in absolute isolation and seclusion from civilisation. We were determined to go forward; turning back was simply not an option.

And then we reached a pan in the middle of nowhere. The road snaked up and out of the pan, over a dune that was overgrown with Kalahari scrub. Our first attempt to conquer the dune failed miserably. Our second and third attempts with more momentum only won us another 30 metres or so, and it was still a long way to the crest. We reconstructed the road by removing the middelmanetjie and stabilising the sand with branches all the way up. A new attempt with a new driver did not improve the situation much. After applying all our newly-learned techniques and tricks, we got no further. The situation was getting desperate. We were exhausted, thirsty, with sore eyes, bloody hands and knees, and aching bodies.



Willie, shifting the sands of the Kalahari. There was lots of road building and clearing on our adventure.





**Above left** Jürgen cracks the inevitable beer in front of his custom-painted 1975 Land Cruiser FJ40, a 'suitable' 4x4 bought while travelling in the Americas. **Above right** The deep sand roads through the Kalahari nowadays are little changed from the tracks conquered by the little Corona in 1970.

The little Toyota only had three gears and was underpowered in second gear and first gear caused too much wheelspin. We were sitting ducks! We sat down and tried to drink a beer but it turned into foam the moment it was swallowed and this was extremely painful, besides its awful taste. So, hot Kalahari water had to do the job.

I tried to keep a cool head. Waiting for the supply truck could take days and our water reserves were running low due to that punctured bag. I got up and walked that troubled road to the bend and had a good look at the topography and then an idea came to me. I told Willie, "Listen, you take the Toyota right down onto the pan and, with a good take-off speed, you come straight up, here, through the bush – don't follow the road – and when you arrive at about there, I'll wait for you and do the pushing."

Lots of preparation work was needed on that 'new road', plus we deflated the tyres further. Willie started on solid ground, floored the accelerator, and with the engine screaming he came up the dune with good speed in second gear. When he reached the bend, the bakkie rejoined the road and still had some momentum. I was waiting at the right spot and started pushing. At first, the bakkie slowed, with one wheel spinning and excavating the buried branches. "Handbrake, apply the handbrake," I yelled.

And then slowly she picked up momentum, inching forward. I pushed as hard as I could and, totally exhausted

and with the last bit of energy, jumped onto the load bin as Willie kept going until he reached safe ground.

"We've conquered the Kalahari," was all I could think. Surely this must have been our greatest challenge.

#### Thirsty work

We were overjoyed to have escaped defeat and decided to set up camp on the spot. I soon realised I had a problem. Due to all the road-building activity during the day, I had had much too little to drink during the day, and the symptoms of dehydration now kicked in – an agonising headache and a never-ending desire for liquid. To make things worse, our warm water tasted really terrible.

After a meagre dinner, we celebrated our victory with the last bottle of 'warm' Villa Rosa, but this didn't do much good. Under the most beautiful sunset, I put two cans of beer on top of each other, wrapped a wet cloth around them and placed them in the evening wind. After a while when the cloth became dry I repeated the process and sometime later the cans were cool and the beer drinkable – much preferable to that brackish-tasting water.

When we crawled into our tent there was lightning, in a northerly direction, ahead of us. During the night I dreamed about a king-size glass of beer with plenty of froth on top and droplets of condensation running down the sides. It was floating like a mirage in the middle of the glaring heat of what looked like the Etosha Pan.

I woke up with a torturing thirst and headache. My mouth was dry and tongue

swollen. I searched for the water bottle in the tent but found it empty. So I got up and crawled out of the tent with a bottle and torch. The lightning was now much more intense, turning the easterly sky into a ball of fire. There was the occasional roll of thunder from the distance and, not too far from our camp, I could hear the cry of a jackal, answered by a second one from further away. An owl fell into that concert and the sounds of the African night, with that incessant lightning, created a spooky atmosphere.

An old German proverb came to mind: "If you don't love solitude then you don't love freedom, because only when you are alone are you free!"

Oh yes – there was plenty of solitude around us!

My dream came to mind and I filled up the bottle and had a long drink. There wasn't much water left in our container; we had wasted too much from that darn perforated cooler bag. What was left was warm and smelled and tasted like it had been used to boil a crayfish. But it quenched the thirst for a while.

It was stuffy in the tent but out in the open a pleasant breeze alleviated my headache, and so I watched the sky for a while and listened to the sounds of the African night.

We got up early to an overcast sky and a cool wind sweeping through the surrounding vegetation. Yet the promised rain never reached us. Our bodies were stiff and aching after the efforts of the previous days and it took a while to get kick-started. We had a frugal breakfast and washed



it down with ‘crayfish coffee’ made from our last water.

During vehicle inspection, I cleaned the air filter, which was jammed with sand, grass, and trapped insects but also discovered a flat tyre. We changed the tyre in a hurry and decided to fix it when the need arose – which it did a few miles down the road when we had another puncture.

Changing a wheel is one thing, but taking the tyre off the rim with basic tools, fixing the tube without the help of water, removing all the sand, and putting it back on, required a little improvising and some patience. Worse, there were two to fix; the second tyre’s tube was shredded.

“There is nothing a German officer cannot do,” quoted Willie. “Yes, we all learn from the book of instruction,” I replied. And then, when pumping up the tyres the old-fashioned way with a hand pump, that torturing headache reappeared.

After the mopane and grasslands in the west, the landscape had changed and now overgrown Kalahari dune land and savannah were in a quarrel for dominance. At this point, our luck changed. Our route took us through damp sand, where it had clearly rained overnight.

Our Toyota was now shovelling wet sand and we left the tweespoor track and drove next to it. It worked well and we made good progress. There were a few washouts where we had to do some roadworks, and then we had to do some major construction work at an omuramba with a big washout across the road that seemed as big as the Sesriem Canyon.

Soon thereafter, the accelerator got stuck and what a surprise we got when we opened the bonnet. The engine, and whatever else there was supposed to be under the bonnet, had disappeared under a thick layer of damp sand. After removing the sand our little ‘Old Faithful’ continued without complaining.

By midday, the relentless sun had burned off the sand’s moisture and the going was getting tough once again, forcing us to revert to old driving practices.

Soon my thirst became intolerable and, in desperation, we made another attempt to down a warm Hansa Tafel as there was nothing else to drink. It was disastrous. The pain, when swallowing, was unbearable and my head wanted to burst.

Somewhere later, much later, out of the bush came rescue in the form of children with a watermelon for sale. We bought it and finished it off in no time. This surely must have saved us from becoming biltong.

When we passed a ‘Maun-Ghanzi-Tsau’ signboard and another to ‘Lake Ngami’, pointing to the right, we knew that the battle had been won. It was only another 60-odd miles to Maun.

Unfortunately, on our route there was no lake and no reeds; only dry grass and sand and that relentless sun above.

At a road junction, with a few huts dotted around, we found a filling station consisting of two drums and a hand-pump, where we filled-up our bakkie. The place’s name, I recall, was Toteng. For the people and kids around us, it must have been the event of the season, to see us crawling out of the bush in a little car, the likes of which they had probably not seen before in that part of the world, covered in sand and dust.

The road to Maun was hot, dry, and extremely dusty, and once again our thirst prevailed and became almost unbearable. We counted the miles and the ‘Fata Morgana’ (mirage) with that glass of beer that reappeared in front of my eyes more than once...

#### **A dose of civilisation**

We reached Maun in the late afternoon and stopped the bakkie in front of the hotel’s big window and – you guessed it – I enjoyed the best-tasting beer ever, a cool Windhoek Export (blue label). A real lifesaver.

After we had ordered a second one our brains became functional once again and we started to wind down and tried to relax. Suddenly we were overwhelmed, as we realised that we had made it in one piece and that we had a special event to toast.

With a hoarse voice, my friend asked his neighbour on the long counter whether this was the only hotel in

town. The gentleman turned his head and examined us from top to bottom and then answered with a question: “Where are you coming from?”

“Southwest!” was the reply.

“How is the road?”

“Don’t call it a road!” we said.

”What are you driving?”

Willie pointed with his hand towards the window: “There she stands!”

The pub was quite busy on that late Saturday afternoon with all kinds of thirsty customers, mainly from the hunting operations, and within minutes we were surrounded.

While they inspected the Toyota, we had to answer many questions and unanimously they came to the conclusion that this must have been the first Kalahari crossing in such a vehicle, and, of course, that had to be celebrated!

We received royal treatment, made many friends, and were invited by Bill – the gentleman my friend had first addressed – to his private lodge. He was originally from Bulawayo but had been working in Maun for 10 years as a builder and constructor.

“Be my guests,” he said, “you can stay as long as you want.”

I still remember the wildebeest braai party the following day, where we had to tell the mayor of Maun our story. On the Monday, Bill took us in his fibreglass mokoro along some of the many waterways, though we were unsuccessful in spotting the Sitatunga that had been talked about the previous day. We had never heard of such an antelope, and when somebody mentioned that it can even dive underwater I had become very sceptical. We also received an invite to join a flight along the Nata triangle hunting concessions, but unfortunately, we had to move on as we were behind schedule. Africa was calling.

Looking back on our 1970 Botswana safari, I recall all the great people we came across, the wildlife, the landscapes, and the natural wonders we were privileged to see and experience. However, the event burned into my memory remains that tough Kalahari crossing! ●

#### **NEXT MONTH**

Botswana Kalahari crossing, 50 years later.



# UGANDA

## THE *pearl* OF AFRICA

This trip, the very last in the series of stories from Dan Grec's two-year Africa round trip, details a scary mishap and some extraordinary wildlife encounters

Story & pictures **Dan Grec**

Crossing from  
Rwanda into Uganda.  
Like SA, drivers must  
now keep to the left.





Adventurer Dan Grec is sending us updates from his two-year trip around Africa's perimeter, covering 30 countries and 130 000km. He is driving a four-door Jeep Wrangler Rubicon. Follow Dan's ongoing adventure around the entire African continent on social media @theroadchosome or go to [www.theroadchosome.com](http://www.theroadchosome.com).





I'm out solo, exploring an isolated gravel track in Uganda when the stunning Lake Albert comes into view over the crest of a hill. I strategically park the Jeep to get the best photo possible and walk away with camera in hand.

As I climb the rock bank for a photo, I see the Jeep move. Almost before I can react it has travelled an entire Jeep length and is picking up speed fast. I desperately scramble after it, hoping without reason there is a way I can fling myself into the driver's seat to stop it. Seeing the inevitable I keep clear, utterly helpless.

Within three or four lengths it hurtles out of control into the ditch on the left before striking the rock wall, very hard. The tyre takes the full impact, violently flipping the Jeep over onto the passenger side before it skids to a crunching stop.

I crumple to the ground, terrified that I may have just ended my African Expedition, and with no idea what to do.

### Into Uganda

A few weeks earlier, I completed another straightforward border crossing from Rwanda into Uganda. After finishing the paperwork and

starting the Jeep, I think for a second before turning off the engine and walking back to the armed military man guarding the boom gate.

"Which side of the road in Uganda?" I ask.

"Keep left," he says, "not like Rwanda."

After swapping sides multiple times now, I figure it never hurts to double-check, and the lack of signs makes me not trust my own memory of which country drives on which side.

### Mgahinga mountain gorillas

A couple of friendly armed park rangers hitch a ride with me to the National Park on the border of Rwanda and The DRC, where mountain gorilla sightings are all but guaranteed. At \$600USD it's not an easy choice, though I rack it up as a 'once in a lifetime' and, as soon as I have paid, I can't wait to get started.

At a very brief introduction, I'm told there is only one gorilla family here, consisting of eight gorillas. This group contains two full-size male silverback gorillas – which is not at all common – and the leader is the second-largest gorilla in existence. Together with four other people, we set out hiking through the thick forest up the gentle slopes of the volcano. After an easy 45-minute

A dodgy handbrake, a steep hill and an absent driver. What could possibly go wrong? Dan's life teeters on the edge.

### UGANDA QUICK FACTS

*Capital City:*

Kampala

*Population:*

43 million

*Size:*

241 000 km<sup>2</sup>

*Languages Spoken:*

2 official (English, Swahili)

*Currency:*

Ugandan Shilling

*Independence*

*from England:*

October 1962



walk we hear, and then see, the men tracking the gorillas sitting calmly on the ground.

From the moment I crouch down, about 10 metres from the massive gorilla, my brain can't process what my eyes are telling it. The silverback is so big and so close, I feel as if I am seeing the best CGI movie of all time. He weighs well over 300kg, almost all being pure muscle, and his biceps, shoulders, and chest are simply too big to comprehend. His head is three or four times bigger than mine and his hands could easily crush my skull. It's a certainty that he could tear me limb from limb with as much effort as it takes to snap a twig. Knowing all of that, it's insane to sit on the ground so close, though the trackers and guides assure me I'm fine.

To move around, the gorilla walks on his front knuckles with his chest forward and, again, I can't believe he is actually real. At times he looks exactly like a stuffed toy – complete with fluffy fur and leathery round belly.

It soon becomes clear each gorilla has a unique personality, though the one thing they all have in common is their ability to completely ignore us. I'm very close to the silverback when he stands up and grunts while striding right beside me, easily close enough for me to reach out and touch – which I don't do.

The baby gorillas are full of beans and wrestle, climb on and eat everything they can, and even take turns using the big silverback as a trampoline. He has an impatient look on his face but doesn't do anything to stop them. Too soon our hour is up, and we tear ourselves away and hike back, still in disbelief about what we have just experienced.

### Ishasha National Park

This rugged park lies on the very western border of Uganda, butting up against the mighty DRC. As soon as I approach the park entrance, I know I'm onto a good thing. It's extremely remote, there is nobody else around and I even hear elephants trumpeting loudly while chatting to the officer at the entrance gate. Throughout the equatorial regions of Africa, I have been shocked to find wide-open hills covered in thick grass, and I smile as I recognise this familiar landscape yet again.

This park is famous for lions that climb trees; the only place in the world where they are known to do this. I keep my eyes peeled and search high and low all over the park, though I never do spot a single lion. The torrential rains keep the temperature down, and I'm told the lions move into the trees in search of a cool breeze when the temperature skyrockets during the hot dry season.



Once onlookers were assured nobody was hurt, we could take stock and plan a recovery.



Back on its wheels after a careful winching exercise. Fenders, mirror and total chaos inside.



The fender damage was obvious, and fixable with duct tape. Of more concern was a potentially ruined engine.



The monster thunderstorms boil all afternoon, making camping by the river a rainy affair. As usual, it's just me and the noisy hippos in the campsite. In the morning I'm moving before sunrise, exploring far into every corner of the park until the skies let loose with a torrential downpour after midday.

Soon after leaving the park I hear a disconcerting noise from under the Jeep. Over the course of a few kilometres, I diagnose it's related to road speed, and it's definitely not the engine or the brakes. I finally nail it down to the front driveshaft, and the universal joint near the transfer case – the very universal I had replaced in South Africa.

At first, I plan to ignore it, though five minutes later the clunking noise is so loud I know I must take action. For the first time after more than 150 000km on my two expeditions, I pull to the side of the road, get out my tools and lie in the dirt to work on the Jeep.

I don't carry a spare, so, for now, I simply remove the front driveshaft entirely, and will

have to make do without 4x4 until I can rebuild or replace the joint in the capital city, or possibly have one sent over.

### **Disaster strikes**

At almost 3 000kg, my Jeep is no lightweight. I have too much stuff and bolted too much onto it, but that's a problem to solve on another day. The handbrake has needed adjustment for a long time now, which is yet another job I have constantly pushed down the list. Stopping on the isolated gravel road above Lake Albert, I kill the engine, pull the handbrake, and leave the transmission in first gear. The hill I have stopped on is not overly steep, though in the past while sitting in the driver's seat I have felt the Jeep move when stopped on a hill.

Given that the transmission is in first gear and my foot is off the clutch, the weight must be overcoming the compression and turning over the engine. In the past, it has only moved a few centimetres every five or ten seconds, which I assume is just one cylinder rolling over.

Muddy roads and torrential rains in the remote Ishasha National Park on Uganda's far western border. It's famous for tree-climbing lions.





It's been a monster day at the wheel, and I'm exhausted. I know I need to get a good photo here, and so I try to concentrate before getting out of the Jeep. I do my usual trick and sit in the seat for a ten count to see if it will roll over a cylinder on this slope. It doesn't budge, so I walk back to take the photo before watching helplessly as my house and shelter smashes onto its side right in front of me.

Immediately I feel more helpless and alone than I ever have while on expedition. Maybe more than I ever have in my entire life. I'm terrified to walk over and really examine the situation, so I spend a few minutes crouching on the ground without getting any closer, somehow hoping to deny reality.

I have my camera, so I snap a few photos, though it makes me feel sick to even see the Jeep through the viewfinder, so I stop.

Attracted by the loud crash, locals begin to materialise out of the forest. I explain time and again that nobody is injured, and everyone is relieved. It's clear they think I'm an idiot, and I tend to agree.

When I stop shaking and start using my brain, I have a good look around. There are a couple of trees off to the side that would be perfect for winching, and so I endeavour to get out the winch controller, which is no easy feat. I climb up the undercarriage and struggle to open the driver's door before I lower myself down to stand on the inside of the passenger door. Looking around I see absolute chaos inside, including a pile of smashed glass beer bottles and fresh eggs I bought earlier. I try not to think about it and get on with the task at hand.

I would prefer to go around the tree with my snatch block and back to the Jeep frame to really pull it up, though my winch rope is not long enough to make the return trip. One local man speaks reasonable English, and he assures me that with the help of everyone gathered we'll get it back on the wheels. I'm a little sceptical given how heavy it is, though he and everyone else are undeterred, and soon they're lifting the rear passenger side while I slowly take up the slack with the winch strung sideways to a tree.

**Below left** The magnificent dominant male silverback gorilla in a troop from the Mgahinga National Park. He was at least three times my size.

**Below right** A mighty tusker in Ishasha National Park – the ellies were everywhere.

**Bottom left** A curious herd of buffalo in Ishasha. No shortage of game in Uganda's parks.

**Bottom right** I made a point of visiting Uganda's national parks, and was rewarded with unusual sightings in each of them. Here a giant lizard suns itself in Murchison National Park.







To my complete surprise, the Jeep slowly climbs and lands on its wheels with a minimum of fuss. It has come to rest half in the ditch and, after a lot of back and forward, I manage to get someone else to disconnect the winch line before I let it roll forward a little. After more communication problems yet another kind local chocks the wheels with massive rocks, and finally, I feel confident it can't move any more.

Again, I feel reluctant to survey the damage, and after shaking an endless procession of hands I finally bring myself to walk around to the passenger side. Miraculously there is no broken glass, and the fibreglass J30 pop-up roof is almost unscathed; there is only a tiny chip in the pop-up section which is purely cosmetic.

I don't usually like to put things down to luck, though in this case, I have to say I might be the luckiest person in the world.

On closer inspection, I see the AEV snorkel took the brunt of the impact, as did the mirror and the two plastic fender flares, which are almost entirely broken off the Jeep. There are dents and scratches in both doors, and both door handles are broken, though, overall, I'm impressed at how well the Jeep has held up.

I begin to hope this isn't as bad as I feared.

I'm worried that oil may have leaked into the

cylinders, so I let it sit for four hours while I slowly clean up and attempt to put everything back where it belongs. I also begin to wonder about any damage caused by the engine turning so fast. I left it in first gear, and notice it had not popped out of gear during the crash. That means the engine was mechanically turned by the weight of the Jeep, so it's entirely possible it has sustained some damage.

I don't know how fast the Jeep would actually go at red line in first gear, though I doubt it really went all that fast. If it did, there is every chance the engine has skipped teeth on the timing chain, which would be a catastrophe. There is nothing I can do, so I try not to think about it.

Duct tape does wonders to hold the fender flares on, and I just throw the mirror inside for now. Under the hood, everything looks sane, with just a hint of power steering fluid leaking from the reservoir, and some engine oil leaking from the filler cap on the valve cover.

Originally, I plan to remove all the spark plugs, though night has well and truly set in, making the task much harder. I rationalise that it's now been sitting right side up for four hours, and it was only on its side, not actually upside-down.

After topping up the engine oil I turn the engine over a few times then immediately turn it

**Top left** The road north; as in the rest of Africa, trucks, Chinese motorbikes and cars compete to keep on going despite the conditions.

**Top right** Stopped at the roadside to remove the offending front driveshaft with its ruined universal joint.

**Above left** Friendly guards and rangers keep an eye on the Jeep at Mgahinga National Park.

**Above right** Bush mechanics at work on repairing the broken aluminium mirror stalk using an oxy-acetylene torch and a steel rod.



off before it actually fires, and everything sounds and seems fine, so I start it up and let it idle. Again, miraculously, everything seems fine, and I have no reason to think I have caused permanent damage. There is no smoke, no rattles and certainly no nasty noises. There aren't even any warning lights on the dash.

During all of this, a local has stayed around to talk to and reassure me, and he suggests I camp near his house, less than 50 metres away. I limp the Jeep off the road and am relieved it seems to drive fine. I set up camp and continue the massive clean-up job. The J30 roof opens perfectly fine, and other than a lot of glass, beer, and broken eggs, the interior is also intact. At first, the Dometic fridge won't turn on, though it comes well after a few hours of being ride-side-up.

In a strange twist of fate, I then see one of the most beautiful sights of my entire life, which I would have missed had it not been for the accident. Thousands of small boats have rowed onto the lake to fish for the night and the small kerosene lamps look like an ocean of stars stretching below me. I'm not sure if I should be smiling or crying, and so after midnight, I'm still shaking as I climb up into bed, feeling like this has all been a horrible dream.

### Disaster aftermath

In the morning my new local friend happily jumps in the Jeep and shows me down to Kibiro Hot Spring, my original destination. It's a small and very hot spring in a beautiful valley, right next to the shores of mighty Lake Albert. I normally love to explore hot springs, but my heart isn't in it today.

On the way out I park the Jeep near the scene of the accident to snap the photo I was originally trying to get. I put it further up where the road isn't so steep and chock the wheels with large rocks. After all that, the photo turns out to be nothing special.

I drive a hundred kilometres and the Jeep seems fine. The roads are not paved, so I can't be sure it's driving completely straight or smooth, but nothing feels wrong, the engine is nice and quiet and there are no lights on the dash.

Driving on the wrong side of the road without a passenger-side mirror is annoying and dangerous so I become determined to fix it one way or another.

I repeatedly ask in every small town and village, and a few days later I find a guy that assures me he can weld the aluminium of the mirror support which snapped. Directly on the

You guessed it; Dan at the equator. The obligatory 'wish you were here' photo.





side of the road, he uses an oxy-acetylene torch to heat everything until the aluminium begins to melt and then uses a steel rod to push the liquid aluminium around until it bridges the gap to form a join. It's exactly like soldering small electronics, and it appears to hold well enough.

Later that day I reattach the mirror and continue to find broken glass and the remains of broken eggs, which now reek horribly after a few days baking in the scorching African sun. I completely disassemble the rear fender flare and repair it with new plastic body clips, making it as good as new. The front fender has been broken and held together with gorilla tape since I clipped a tree stump in The Congo, so I just replace a few clips and use more gorilla tape, which is sturdy enough for an African fix.

After a few hundred more kilometres, I notice the front axle is leaking oil from the end of the axle tube on the driver's side, something it has never done before. I wonder if hitting the bank so violently on that side has unseated an axle

seal, or if I've done more major damage to the notoriously weak D44 front axle.

I will have to keep a close eye on it for the next phase of the journey through Africa.

### **The pearl of Africa**

I had been looking forward to Uganda since first landing in Africa over two years ago, and it far exceeded my expectations. Even with the biggest challenge yet to the expedition, I fell in love with this wonderful country.

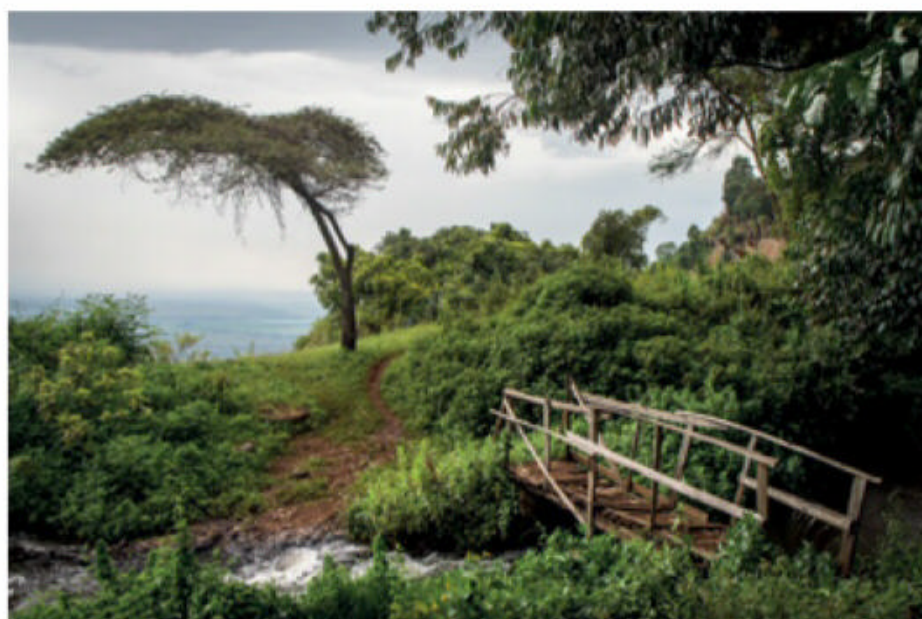
Locals are well educated and are extremely happy to include me in their daily life. In the evenings I played pool and enjoyed cold beer at local bars while chatting easily. I genuinely felt that locals were not treating me any differently than their own friends – in Uganda, everyone is the same, and it feels fantastic.

On top of that, Uganda has stunning wildlife, breathtaking scenery, and immense National Parks making it easy to see why it's often called 'The Pearl Of Africa'. ●

**Below left** Camping at Lake Bunyoni. The lushness of the area was hard to believe.

**Below right** Part of the view hiking to Sipi Falls from a temporary base at Moses Camp. Worth doing.

**Bottom** Dramatic sunset light silhouettes a volcano. Uganda boasts many scenic wonders.





**SA4x4 & ULTIMATE ADVENTURES** GUIDED SELF-DRIVE 4x4 TOURS 2020

# SERENGETI MIGRATION

## *expedition*

### BASICS

**Venue:** Serengeti National Park, Tanzania

**Date:** 31 May-1 July, 2020

**Cost:** R47 500 per person

**Includes:** Camping & Lodge Accommodation,  
All Park Fees, Dinner daily

**Excludes:** Fuel, Border costs, Drinks & Visas

### DETAILS

If there is one place you have to visit in your lifetime it is the Serengeti National Park to experience the annual wildebeest migration. You have all seen it on numerous documentaries on the National Geographic channel but nothing compares to actually experiencing it first-hand.

The vast plains of this magnificent wilderness will leave you breathless and leave you with memories to last a lifetime. This epic expedition will take us through Botswana and into Zambia where we visit the mighty Victoria Falls and rejuvenate our souls in the Kapishya Hot Springs. We head into Tanzania to experience the spectacular Ngorogoro Crater and then on to the Serengeti National Park to witness the awe-inspiring wildebeest migration and the predators that feast on this spectacle.

From there we travel to Malawi and spend a few days lazing on the shores of Lake Malawi before continuing south to the white sandy beaches of Mozambique to end off this epic expedition.

This trip is limited to a maximum of eight vehicles and is trailer-friendly and suitable for the whole family.



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## FIVE FEATURES THAT DEFINE AN ICON

**L**and Rover has defined all-terrain capability and toughness from the conception of its very first 4x4. The Defender and Series models before it, have gone above and beyond for decades, securing iconic status for their ability to help people make more of their world.

Though its distinctive overall silhouette makes the New Defender as instantly recognisable as the original, there are a number of iconic features which have been passed on through generations of Series Land Rovers and Defenders since the original appeared at the Amsterdam Motor Show in 1948.

The New Defender takes these much loved characteristics and reimagines them for the 21st century. Here's a list of five features which contributed to the Defender's iconic status, and all of them can be found on the latest iteration...

### Alpine windows

A defining feature of all Defenders, Alpine windows in the upper-rear roof area are specially designed to let light into the cabin. The Alpine name also alludes to their original purpose – offering scenic views when touring mountain ranges.

### Side-hinged tailgate

A tailgate that swings open like a conventional door has been a trademark of all Defenders, right through to today. The design helps give the New Defender its unique rear profile, while also allowing a mounting place for the spare wheel. Featuring a strong four-layer design, the Defender tailgate's hinge and strike plate have been subjected to 30 000 test slam cycles in temperatures from -30 to +80 degrees Celsius.

***“The New Defender is respectful of its past but is not harnessed by it. This is a new Defender for a New Age. Its unique personality is accentuated by its distinctive silhouette and optimum proportions, which make it both highly desirable and seriously capable – a visually compelling 4x4 that wears its design and engineering integrity with uncompromised commitment.”***

Gerry McGovern,  
Chief Design Officer,  
Land Rover



**Above left** The newest Defender follows in the tyre prints of an early Series 1. Related, but somewhat different. **Above right** The last of the Defender Heritage Edition models in their Grasmere Green hue. The latest Defender's Pangea Green continues an evergreen tradition.



***“For us designers, nothing comes close to redesigning the last automotive icon. The design of the New Defender is a manifestation of our modernist design philosophy, elemental yet incredibly sophisticated.”***

Massimo Frascella,  
Creative Director,  
Land Rover Design

#### Externally mounted spare

Whether fixed to the bonnet in the early days or on the tailgate later on, the iconic Land Rover's spare wheel has always been handily mounted externally. Apart from being a visual Defender trademark, this mounting position helps achieve a short rear overhang, and therefore steep departure angle. The Defender's spare is secured with heavy duty locking wheel nuts.

#### Rugged steel wheels

Though alloy wheels are far more commonplace today, rugged steel rims are a requisite option on all Defenders. The New Defender comes

with optional 18-inch pressed steel wheels in Gloss White and off-road tyres with an outside rolling diameter of 815mm – the largest across the entire Land Rover family.

#### Pale green hue

Right from the very first Series 1 Rovers, when colour choice was dictated by surplus aircraft paint, the iconic 4x4 has come with pale green body panels. More recently the Heritage Edition Defender was finished in a throwback Grasmere green. The New Defender is available with the latest iteration of the historic colour – Pangea Green. ●



**Above left** Steel wheels are an option, shod with the largest rolling diameter off-road tyres in the Land Rover range. **Above right** The iconic side-hinged tailgate has been retained, for a number of practical reasons. **Below** A rear-mounted spare is an instantly-recognisable Series and Defender feature.



The New Defender 110 is scheduled for South African launch in the first half of 2020, with a short wheelbase 90 derivative set to follow later in 2020.







**RAD RIG**

# THE DREAM CATCHER

**MOTORHOME WORLD'S ONE-OF-A-KIND  
LUXURY GLOBETROTTER**

Words & pictures **Andrew Middleton**



**W**hen it comes to overland exploration, there are several ways to go about it. You can go the lightweight route with a bakkie and a tent, you could tow an equipped off-road trailer, or you could opt to travel in your home-on-wheels. The Dreamcatcher is very much the latter option.

Built to endure extended touring periods in the Siberian and Russian winter, where temperatures routinely drop below minus 40 degrees Celsius, this lavishly-equipped motorhome is the ultimate 'money is no object' expression of luxury overlanding. The beast can comfortably sleep four absolutely anywhere on earth.

The owners who commissioned this build are very well travelled but are yet to include Siberia and Russia in their travel log. Exploring these territories during winter is going to be a huge challenge, though Dreamcatcher has been designed expressly to do the job.

Motorhome World's factory in Atlantis Industria took on this custom build after a thorough investigation of Russian exploration

vehicles and, specifically, research on the effects of extremely cold temperatures on mechanical components and how to insulate against those sorts of conditions.

The construction process, taking just over eight months, was an exercise in experimenting with new technologies – including developing a twin-voltage electrical system and fitting heating pads on nearly every electrical or mechanical component exposed to the elements.

Choosing Motorhome World to do the build may seem like a strange choice of manufacturer when there are Russian and European companies specialising in similar builds. Simply put, that decision came down to a combination of cost and experience. Having the rig built in Europe would have cost up to three times as much, while Motorhome World has a vast knowledge of custom builds for extreme conditions.

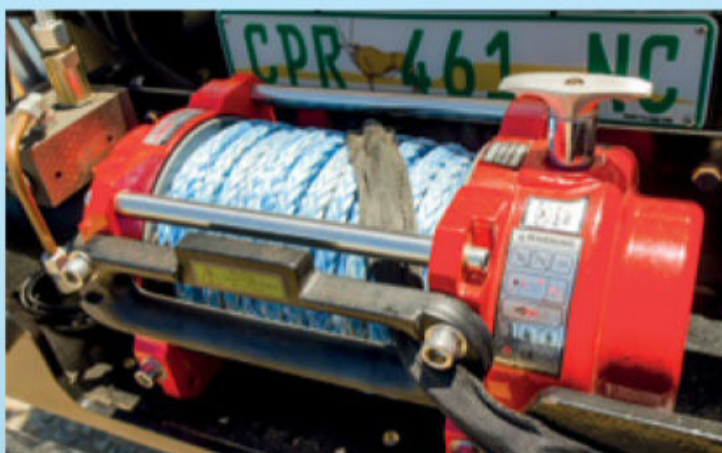
Our view? They have totally pulled it off, creating the most incredible overlanding machine I've ever been lucky enough to experience.

Based on the massive Iveco Eurocargo 4x4 chassis, this 10-ton behemoth has a features list

**This page, below**  
Each of the batteries is enclosed and heated to ensure they stay functioning. High end winch with synthetic cable needs to be capable of recoveries way north of 10 tons.

**Opposite page, top**  
Victron electronics dominate this set-up, which includes an inverter and the ability to charge from a variety of power sources. Electric folding steps deploy so you can enter this motorhome without an advanced climbing certificate. Of course, there's an electric awning too.

**Main pic** Dreamcatcher is based on a 10-ton Iveco Eurocargo 4x4 chassis.







## SPECIFICATIONS

### IVECO Eurocargo 4x4 chassis

GVM: 15 000kg

Tare (as Motorhome):  
10 260kg

Wheelbase:  
4 150mm

Engine capacity:  
5 900cc (in-line 6-cyl)

Max power:  
176kW @ 2 700rpm

Max torque:  
810Nm @ 1 200-2 100rpm

Gearbox:  
Six-speed manual

Diff locks:  
3 (Centre, Front, & Rear)

Transfer box ratio:  
Low 0.79:1/High 1.62:1

Wheels: 9 x 20" rims,  
14.00 x R20 single tyres

Min ground clearance:  
300mm

Vehicle length:  
8 584mm

Vehicle width:  
2 654mm

Vehicle height:  
3 900mm

Motorhome body  
internal length:  
5 416mm

Motorhome body  
internal width:  
2 364mm

Motorhome body  
internal height:  
2 008mm

Total fuel capacity:  
600 litres

Total freshwater  
capacity:  
330 litres

Total grey water  
capacity:  
70 litres

Electrical system:  
220V/110V

Inverter system:  
3 000W (220V)

Total battery capacity  
(motorhome):  
675Ah

Total solar capacity:  
640W (12V)

Diesel generator:  
2 800W (220V)





longer than most luxury homes. Climb aboard via the electric step and you'll find all the comforts of home – including a dishwasher, clothes washer/dryer, oven, full-sized fridge, and stand-up shower. Inside and out, the attention to detail is evident from every angle.

To deal with extreme cold, a complex air circulation system keeps warm air moving around the interior at all times via countless vents behind every surface. The reasoning is that when exterior temperatures plummet, condensation forms on any surface where there is stagnant air. This goes for all the cupboards, and even the double mattress rests on pads above its base with hot air piped underneath. A large air conditioner mounted on the roof helps to keep the interior air dry, and is set to a comfy

22 degrees Celsius no matter the weather.

Powering all the appliances and energy-hungry heating systems is a 220V diesel generator mounted in-board and chugging out 2 800W. In addition, a bank of solar panels on the roof deliver up to 640W of 12V power. Interestingly, when the rig is parked up at a caravan park or campsite with power it can receive either 220V or 110V to charge its batteries; a complex but necessary arrangement that makes it possible to charge up almost anywhere in the world.

For freshwater, a hose can be plugged into an inlet valve whenever necessary to fill up a 330-litre freshwater tank. Greywater is held in a separate 70-litre tank that can be flushed at any time using the rather complex water

Literally everything that opens and shuts is fitted into this compact, air-conditioned space, including a full kitchen, laundry facilities and a complete wet room. To cope with Siberian winter temperatures, every compartment, including the space under the bed, is ventilated to eliminate condensation problems.

### FIND OUT MORE

Motorhome World  
021 577 3863  
087 9850630  
info@motorhome-world.com  
www.motorhome-world.com





Motorhome World is justly proud of their custom hydraulic spare wheel carrier. It folds down, then cranks the wheels to the upright position to make changes a little easier. It can also double as a motorcycle carrier.

tank management system. Water is heated using a diesel-powered geyser. For the sake of practicality, the stove is also powered by diesel, ensuring the vehicle only uses one fuel which can be purchased almost anywhere.

The problem with diesel is that in extremely cold temperatures it becomes a jelly and won't flow. To this end, the fuel lines, engine block, and 600-litre diesel tank all have heating pads on them connected to a power supply to keep the fuel flowing. The Dreamcatcher's three massive deep-cycle batteries also receive heaters for good measure.

One of the first things you may spot at the rear of the vehicle is the two spare tyres mounted high up on a big steel

rack. Weighing in at well over 100kg each, changing a tyre solo would be near impossible. The Motorhome World engineers, therefore, designed a rack that hydraulically raises or lowers the tyres and stands them upright, making a tough job possible. The hydraulic lifters may in the future be converted to hold the owner's BMW motorcycle instead of tyres.

With its four-wheel-drive system and three differential locks, the Dreamcatcher is truly a go-anywhere family home. At a chunk over R3 million, it's clear luxury and capability of this order doesn't come cheap, but the expert craftsmanship on this one-of-a-kind vehicle is absolutely incredible. Even better is that it was built right here in sunny South Africa. ●

## INTERIOR FEATURES

- Anti-Condensation Ventilation System (ACS)
- Floor-level RGB LED mood lighting
- Diesel burning geyser
- Diesel burning air heater
- Diesel burning two-plate stove
- Water pressure reducing adjustable valve
- Water tank management valve system
- Water tank automatic temperature regulation
- Roof-mounted air-conditioner
- Convection microwave
- Dishwasher
- Combination clothes washer/dryer
- 100-litre Stainless steel drawer fridge
- 100-litre Stainless steel drawer freezer
- Bed 1 950mm x 1 500mm
- Four-stage water filter
- Stainless steel kitchen sink with drip tray & glass cover
- Thetford cassette toilet
- Ceramic washbasin
- Separate shower area with duckboard

## EXTERIOR FEATURES

- Stainless steel windscreen protectors
- Stainless steel bull bar
- 16-ton hydraulic winch
- Fiamma entry door handle/security lock
- LED work lamps in each corner
- Electric three-tier folding entry step
- Fiamma 4.5-metre automatic awning (no legs)
- DC to DC (24V to 12V) converter
- Stainless steel roof protector rails
- Heating pads for chassis batteries, water, & diesel tanks
- Auto temperature control for heating pads
- Hydraulic spare wheel drop-and-place upright system (for two full-size spare wheels)



# *Light* **on the**





# dark side

## VW AMAROK DARK LABEL

Report & pictures **Andrew Middleton**

**W**ith a brand new Amarok co-developed with Ford on the horizon for 2022, or thereabouts, VW is rolling out a few special editions based on the existing technology. It's a sure way to ensure consumer appeal against some of the contemporary rivals who are now into the next phase of their development cycle.

That said, getting acquainted with the Amarok Dark Label Special Edition underlined that the Amarok is still a top-notch product with arguably the best build quality and most impressive attention to detail of any bakkie in the sector. The tried and tested 132kW BiTDI engine works best with the slick-shifting 8-speed automatic, returning almost unbelievable fuel consumption of 7.4l/100km on our 100km test route, which included a mild off-road foray at Grabouw 4x4. This was a largely 'unloaded' result, combined with frugal driving, and would likely climb closer to the theoretical 9.0 l/100km heavily loaded and in town traffic.

The latest Dark Label (not Black Label) includes a number of external features which set it apart from the standard Highline. These include a locally-made MAXE sports bar, along with matte-finish headlight shrouds, exterior mirrors and door handles. The grille features a dark lacquered chrome. Rear windows are tinted for better privacy and the stealth look continues with those blacked-out B-pillars. 'Dark Label' lettering features prominently on the sills above 18-inch alloy wheels. Though not part of the Dark Label package, the Amarok in this spec does come with a permanent grippy bed liner, which is rare in the segment.

Interior spec includes full 'Vienna' leather trim, black headlining, and floor mats with 'Dark Label' lettering. You'll also get a voice-controlled media system including a smallish 6.33-inch







## SPECIFICATIONS

### VW Amarok Dark Label 2.0 BiTDI

Price:	R695 800
Engine:	2.0-litre twin turbo
Power:	132kW @ 4 000rpm
Torque:	420Nm @ 1 500-2 000rpm
Transmission:	8-speed automatic (DSG) with manual mode
Fuel consumption claimed:	9.0 litres/100km
Fuel consumption tested:	7.4 litres/100km (including off-road test)
Payload:	838kg (or 1 041kg with optional heavy-duty springs)
Tyres:	255/60 R18 112T
Warranty:	3 years/100 000km
Service plan:	5 years/90 000km

capacity touchscreen (which works exceptionally well), along with optional navigation and front and rear PDC with a reversing camera.

This high-spec Amarok already comes standard with the highest level of safety equipment available, featuring a well-judged traction control system which has a push-button Off-Road button that recalibrates the ABS system to make it more effective when braking at higher speeds on gravel, plus recalibrates throttle sensitivity and gearbox programming. This version of VW's 4Motion system, linked to the 8-speed auto, offers permanent 4WD with a centre clutch to link the axles, a more



Amarok interior is pure VW classy stuff, with a small but effective capacitive touchscreen. The load bed boasts a hard-wearing liner, which is always a good thing for the occasional work duty. Aesthetics on the Dark Label edition adds some pizzazz, but we'd ditch the low-lying side steps. The drivetrain combination delivers almost unbelievably good fuel consumption.

sophisticated solution that eliminates inter-axle wind-up found on part-time 4WD set-ups. In addition, the safety packages include post-collision braking, automatically stopping the vehicle in the event of an accident. Daytime running lights and a tyre pressure monitor complete the safety package.

The VW website shows the Amarok double cab Highline pricing starts from R640 400 (incl. VAT), but the Highline Plus comes in at R718 200 (incl. VAT) – so the Dark Label at R695 800 (incl. VAT) represents a clever price mid-point.

On the road, the Amarok impressed with its frugal engine and slick-shifting gearbox – surely the best gearbox in the segment by a long shot. The ride is particularly plush with low NVH levels and a cossetting, if familiar, interior. We were never wanting for more power out of the 2.0-litre mill, apart from a slight flat spot in the rev mid-range when going up long but not steep hills, for example, so knowing that an additional R100k would be needed to have the V6 option in the driveway had us only slightly green.

On our off-road test, we still felt the transmission could have done with a low range box. It is plenty capable without, though the Ranger scores here in having a broad auto box

ratio spread while retaining the transfer case. Truth is, for most overlanding purposes, the simplicity can be an advantage.

While the traction control system handled axle twisters and steep slippery slopes with loose rocks with confidence, the lock-up on the same axles and between axles via the centre diff was slightly slower than optimal. To get through some sections, more revs needed to be dialled in, which is not always ideal when rock crawling. Yes, there is a proper rear locking diff, but the systems now available on rival Toyota and Ford products are slightly quicker-acting. There's not much in it though, as the Amarok always felt very much in control.

What kept being driven home, as it were, was how good this product from VW is. Though one expects quality at this price point, the impression is of a well-resolved product, replete with finely-crafted design and excellent finishes. It offers topline SUV-like driving characteristics across a range of terrains, and overall is effortless to use. Perhaps it is not the most hardcore off-roader, but it is an eminently capable bakkie with the ability to take a load while delivering a safe and comfortable ride on most surfaces – whether it is corrugated gravel or fast highway. ●







# Steelmate TP-S9

## Solar powered TPMS (External sensor)

Report & pictures **Jacques Viljoen**

**T**yre Pressure Monitoring Systems (TPMS) are an essential piece of kit when travelling and they are becoming more common on new vehicles. But what if you want to fit a pressure monitor to your older 4x4 that has taken you all over the world?

The problem is the aftermarket systems with internal sensors require your tyres to be removed to insert the sensor inside each wheel. These systems generally require a power source as well.

Steelmate Automotive has the answer to this problem with their TP-S9, a four-

wheel wireless and solar-powered TPMS. It features external screw-on sensors and a wireless solar-powered colour display.

The display provides a continuous readout of the pressures of each tyre and both a visual and audible warning for low or high pressure and temperature. All of these can be set to user specifications depending on your vehicle. The display, in addition, adjusts its brightness according to ambient conditions, so is always easy to read.

For testing purposes, I fitted the TPMS on a

Toyota Prado and on an Isuzu D-Max double cab. Installation was a breeze and took me less than 45 seconds per wheel. Simply remove the standard plastic valve cap then put on the rubber dust cover provided, followed by the brass nut. To ensure there are no air leaks through the sensor, make sure you screw the nut to the end of the valve stem thread, then screw on the TPMS sensor as you would a normal valve cap. Each is clearly labelled for its destination wheel. Next, use the included mini spanner to turn the brass nut counter-

clockwise so it is fast against the TPMS sensor. This ensures the sensor doesn't come loose under vibrations.

Due to the TP-S9 being solar-powered, the best place to mount it is on top of the dashboard using the included 3M double-sided tape. It does, however, have a USB charging port if you would like to mount it somewhere else or if you have concerns about the unit remaining charged when the car is parked inside. Note that the USB charger and micro USB plug is not included in this particular TPMS kit.



After selecting the desired pressure unit (PSi or Bar), the driver can easily set the desired tyre pressure threshold (with a lower limit of 0.9 Bar and an upper limit of 6.0 Bar). A 25% deviation from this pressure due to a leak or puncture will result in a visual and audible alarm from the unit. It is easy enough to change the default setting when pressures are dropped, for example, to drive for a length of time in deep sand. Temperature is also displayed for each tyre, with a default alarm setting above 80 degrees Celsius.

If tyre pressures are raised and lowered often, check out one of the internal sensor models available from supplier Steelmate Automotive (the equivalent

would be the TP-S9i – priced at R2 499). This would prove more efficient, as the external TPMS sensors must be removed from the tyres to change pressures. Steelmate also has a two-wheel unit if you want to keep an eye on your trailer's tyre pressures.

I checked the pressures displayed by the unit against the readings from an analogue gauge and found the system to be quite accurate. A key advantage of the system, however, is having a constant readout of tyre pressure and temperature changes while on the move. In addition, the alarms for pressure deviation are very audible.

Overall, we found the TP-S9 to be an affordable, accurate, and extremely-easy system to install. ●



The display of the TP-S9 (below) is easy to read and has auto brightness adjustment. The external sensors are quick and easy to install – it takes just 45 seconds per wheel to pop on the rubber seal, then screw in the fastening nut and sensor.

### FEATURES

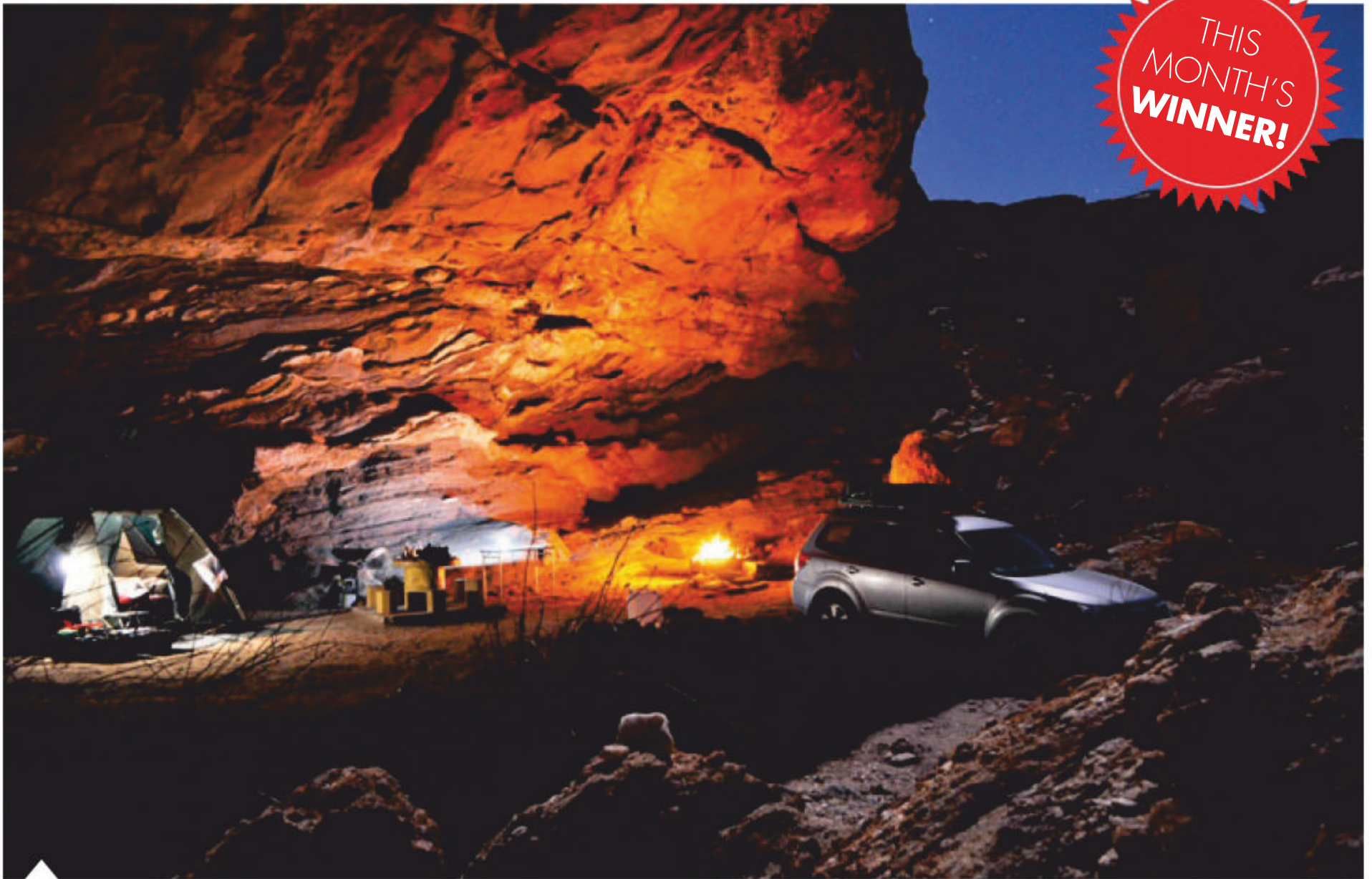
- Battery life (sensors): 2 years
- Unit weight (display): 18 grams
- External sensor operating temperatures: Minus 40 to plus 105°C
- Display maximum operating temperature: 85°C
- Operating frequency: 433.92MHz
- Pressure units: Bar and PSi
- Pressure threshold: Upper limit 6.0 Bars/ Lowest 0.9 Bar
- Intelligent sleeping mode – saves batteries
- High tyre temperature warning: Above 80°C
- Low battery: Visual and audible warning
- Price: R1 999

### FIND OUT MORE

Steelmate Automotive  
SA (Pty) Ltd  
Unit 22 Reliance Centre  
107 Heidelberg Road  
City Deep, Johannesburg  
+27 81 568 3954  
082 578 8866  
info@steel-mate.co.za  
www.steel-mate.co.za  
(Free country-wide  
delivery within three days,  
for online orders.)







**Neill Vannett**

A Forester is not your conventional overlanding vehicle, but Neill's Scooby is fitted with a 1-inch lift kit, BF Goodrich AT tyres, Gorilla mud flaps, upgraded aluminium radiator and a sump guard. A Front Runner roof rack carries a second spare wheel, gazebo, and recovery tracks. This photo was shot at Mirabib campsite in Namibia.



**Gavin Paton**

Gavin's 1989 Suzuki Escudo (known as Vitara in SA) is pretty much stock, but he says this little 4x4 goes anywhere and can climb any hill. This image was snapped at Khutse Game Reserve in Botswana.

**Pieter Vos**

Pieter's Pajero Sport, seen here at the Protea 4x4 training facility near Krugersdorp, is fitted with a snorkel, roof bars, and an aftermarket front bumper with an LED light bar.



### Pieter Botha

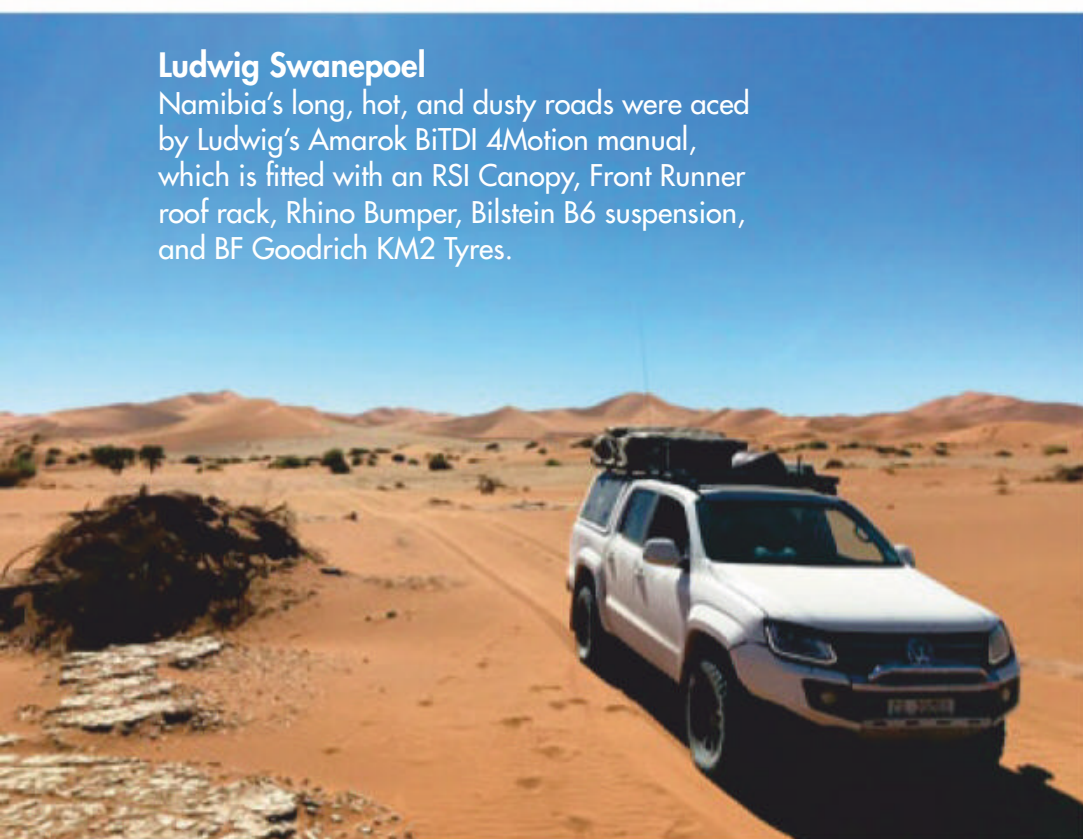
Pieter's Fortuner is fitted with Ironman suspension and lift kit. It also has rock sliders from Stofpad 4x4 and an Ironman winch. He has also fitted a Front Runner roof rack with spade and high lift, tow bar from Toyota, upgraded bull bar, long-range fuel tank, and a 220V power system.

### Juanre Bean

Juanre's SJ413, named Luna, features the original G13 engine, but with a sequential fuel injection system and a Spitronics ECU. His ride also has LED headlights and running lights, a heavy-duty custom front bumper, and trick leather interior accessories, including the door cards, grab handles, sun visors, and door straps.

### Ludwig Swanepoel

Namibia's long, hot, and dusty roads were aced by Ludwig's Amarok BiTDI 4Motion manual, which is fitted with an RSI Canopy, Front Runner roof rack, Rhino Bumper, Bilstein B6 suspension, and BF Goodrich KM2 Tyres.



## ENTER & WIN! DESERT AIR JACK



Email an image of your 4x4 in an overland location (or post it on Instagram), and be eligible for the Readers' Rides prize. The prize is a heavy-duty Desert Air Jack which retails at R2 581, at any one of the 27 4x4 Mega World stores throughout South Africa. This lightweight and versatile air jack, made from PVC, requires no specialised mounting points, can lift up to three tons in almost any conditions from mud to sand, and can be inflated using either a compressor or exhaust pressure. For more 4x4 Mega World products, phone 011 454 2558 or go to [www.4x4megaworld.co.za](http://www.4x4megaworld.co.za)

**HOW TO ENTER:** Email your Readers' Rides entry to [editor@sa4x4.co.za](mailto:editor@sa4x4.co.za). Or post them on our Instagram page using the tagline #SA4x4Readersrides. We prefer hi-res images (1MB or larger). Please provide a description of the vehicle and the place. Remember to include your Name, Delivery Address and a Contact Number.





## 4X4 KUNGWINI ACADEMY TRACKS AND TRAILS

GP • GRADE 1-4 • SELF • GUIDE • Bronkhorstspuit, 12 km • GPS: S 25°51.972' E 28°42.033'



40km from Pta, Jhb Eastern tip of Magaliesberg. Basic academy instructed obstacles. Excellent for training. More than 30 4WD obstacles. 21km scenic eco & birding trails. Various shaded picnic spots. Lapa & boma for training & social. Camping in shaded area. Neat ablutions.

Total Distance: 1,4 - 21km  
Best Time: All year  
Min Vehicles: 1  
Max Vehicles: 40  
Low-Range: Yes  
Ground Clearance: Yes

info@4x4kungwini.co.za • Hugo: 082 494 0950 • Johan (4x4 Instrukteur): 083 277 4648  
www.4x4kungwini.co.za • f: 4x4kungwini

## BASS LAKE ADVENTURES



GP • GRADE 2-4 • MEYERTON

Bass Lake offers a very unique venue, including a 10-ha lake filled with clear spring water. The trail is technical with very interesting obstacles that are vehicle friendly. We offer 4x4 courses / team builds / fun days and can supply vehicles for these bookings. See website. NO 4x2 vehicles! Day visitors welcome. You may swim / kayak / dive / snorkel etc. after your 4 x 4 drive. You may camp over or book into our tented camp, offering 'backpackers' to en-suite lodges. Casual, fully-licensed coffee shop open from breakfast onwards, with takeaway.

TD: 14km Min: 1 (people) L-R: Yes  
BT: All year Max: 6+ GC: Yes

Tel: 016 366 1127/8/30 • info@basslake.co.za  
www.basslake.co.za

## GAUTENG/DE WILDT 4X4 GAME PARK & ACCOMMODATION



GP • GRADE 2-5 • SELF • 4x4/4x2  
Hartebeespoort • GPS: S25° 40'10.2" E27° 56'45.9

De Wildt 4x4 is adjacent to De Wildt Cheetah breeding station in the Magaliesberg. The route includes: rock, sand & mud with bypasses. This top class 4x4 Game Park with training venue is ideal for conferences, team building and family outdoor activities, offering excellent game viewing, breathtaking scenery, panoramic views and idyllic overnight facilities in log cabins & campsites. An ideal family getaway. Open seven days a week. Also available are swimming pools, picnic area, braai facilities, lapa, mountain biking, hiking etc. We have a new area for private functions with fixed tents and new bush camp.

TD: 14km BT: All year GC: Yes

083 268 8185 • 082 554 5334  
info@dewildt4x4.co.za • www.dewildt4x4.co.za

## LUDERITZ/KOICHAB 4X4 DUNE TRAIL



NAMIBIA • GRADE 3-4 • GUIDE • Luderitz, 90km  
GPS: S 26° 10 28.3 E 15° 59 22.2

Drive the mighty Koichab Dunes in the southern Namib @ day-sleep under the stars @ night. Trailer & caravan friendly on certain tours. Also day trips to "Ghost town - Elizabeth bay - in the Sperrgebiet". Big discounts on Luderitz accommodation for our guests. Find us: Tripadvisor - **NAMIB OFFROAD EXCURSIONS** - (Luderitz things to do)

TD: 300+km Min: 8 (people) L-R: Yes  
BT: All year Max Vehicle: 12 GC: Yes

Heinz: + 264 811288050 • + 264 63202958  
noextours@gmail.com • www.noextours.weebly.com

## RUST DE WINTER 4X4 BUNDU TRAIL



MP • GRADE 3-5 • GUIDE • Pretoria, 100km

A tough two-day 4x4 guided trail starting in bushveld with sandy tracks. Trails wind through fairytale gorges and valleys, steadily climbing uphill and mountain passes on typical rocky mountain trails. Overnight on mountains in own tent. 15 vehicles maximum. 100km north of Pretoria near Pienaars Rivier, Mpumalanga. Not for vehicles without low-range. R750 per vehicle.

Peter: 082 558 6184 • 012 379 1715  
admin@4x4atv.org



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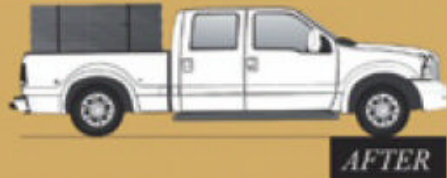
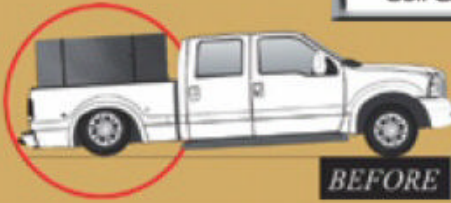
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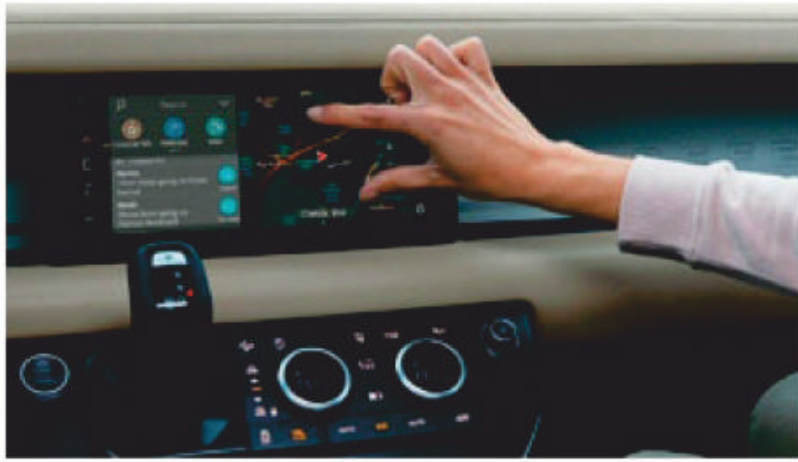






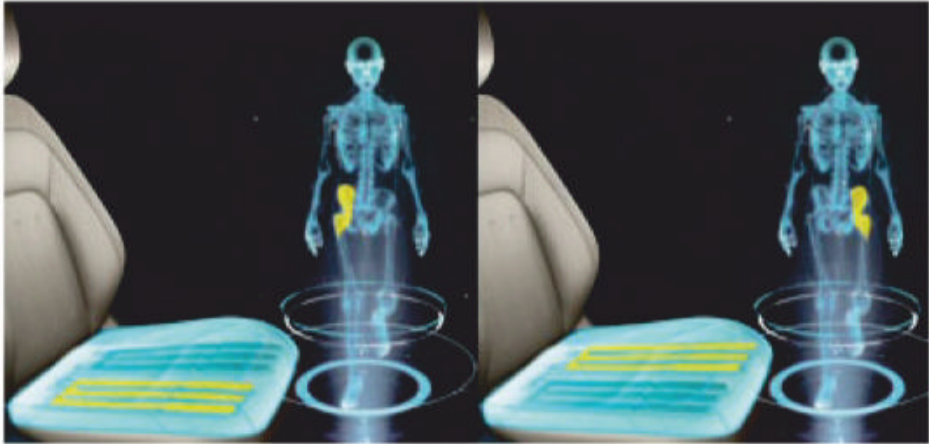
### GREEN TOYOTA

Toyota South Africa Motors (TSAM) has actively supported local environmental initiatives for many years, participating in public projects such as beach and river clean-ups as well as having structured programmes for dealers and the company itself. Initially, dealers signed a commitment to support TSAM's environmental programme. This has become more comprehensive over time, with a set of standards that require compliance. Already 200 of the Toyota and Lexus dealerships have attained Toyota's ECO-3 standard, which includes key elements of the international ISO 14001 standard. Now the Toyota benchmark has been raised to ECO-3 Advanced, which brings it in line with recent revisions to ISO 14001. "Our objective now is to get the dealers to an ECO-3 Advanced level, which puts even more focus on reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, promotes a recycling culture that minimises waste to landfill and optimises water usage," explained Charles Classen and Gregory Molise, who drive the dealer environmental programme for Toyota SA.



### WELL CONNECTED

The Land Rover Defender family has showcased its new dual eSIM connectivity at CES 2020 in Las Vegas, the world's largest consumer electronics show. The new Defender is the first vehicle with two embedded LTE modems for enhanced connectivity, while the vehicle's new Pivi Pro infotainment system shares electronic hardware with the latest smartphones. Pivi Pro allows customers to make full use of the Software-Over-The-Air (SOTA) technology in the New Defender without compromising the system's ability to stream music and connect to apps. A 10-inch high-resolution touchscreen allows customers to control numerous aspects of the vehicle using the same processing hardware as the latest smartphones. In addition, customers can connect two mobile devices at once using Bluetooth.



### SHAPE-SHIFTING SEATS

Jaguar Land Rover is developing the seat of the future – a pioneering shape-shifting system designed to tackle the health risks of sitting for too long. The 'morphable' seat being trialled by Jaguar Land Rover's Body Interiors Research division uses actuators in the seat foam to create constant micro-adjustments that make your brain think you're walking. More than a quarter of people worldwide live increasingly sedentary lifestyles, which can shorten muscles in the legs, hips, and gluteals causing back pain. The weakened muscles also mean you are more likely to injure yourself from falls or strains. By simulating the rhythm of walking, a movement known as pelvic oscillation, the JLR technology can help drivers forced to spend an unhealthy amount of time in their cars. The research is part of Jaguar Land Rover's commitment to continually improving customer wellbeing through technological innovation. Previous projects have included research to reduce the effects of motion sickness and the implementation of ultraviolet light technology to stop the spread of colds and flu.

### STOP THE FAKES

There has been a massive crackdown on sellers of dangerous knock-offs of the Black Rhino 4x4 range of wheels. Since September 2019, authorised Black Rhino dealer Treads Unlimited, along with members of the South African Police Service's Commercial Crime Unit, local authorities, and industry experts have raided sites in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal and seized an undisclosed number of counterfeit Black Rhino wheels. The seized goods are being held for safekeeping, pending their destruction. Treads Unlimited, a division of TiAuto (the holding company for a range of brands including Tiger Wheel & Tyre), has warned motorists to be extremely wary of retailers offering Black Rhino wheels at prices that seem too good to be true. As the investigation and raids continue, Treads Unlimited is offering a reward of R5 000 in the form of a product voucher to anyone with information that leads to the seizure of counterfeit Black Rhino wheels and/or the arrest of individuals involved in the import, distribution, or sale of such wheels. Email your tip-offs to Werner Fourie at [wernerf@tiauto.co.za](mailto:wernerf@tiauto.co.za).



**BLACK RHINO**  
HARD ALLOYS





## STELLAR SUBARU

The latest Forester has been voted one of the “Best in Class Cars of 2019” in the European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP) 2019 safety performance test. The Forester received the award in the Small Off-Road/MPV class. In 2017, the Subaru XV and Impreza were similarly awarded in the Small Family Car class.

The Forester achieved the highest score for “Child Occupant Protection” and clinched a high score in the “Safety Assist” section thanks to the standard EyeSight Driver Assist System.

In Japan, the Forester won first prize in the 2018 Japan New Car Assessment Program (JNCAP) collision safety performance assessment and the highest rating of ASV+++ (Advanced Safety Vehicle Triple Plus) in the 2019 JNCAP Preventive Safety Performance Assessment.

Subaru’s aim is to eliminate traffic accident deaths in its cars by 2030, including collisions with pedestrians and cyclists, through continuous enhancement of its primary, active, passive, and pre-crash safety technologies.

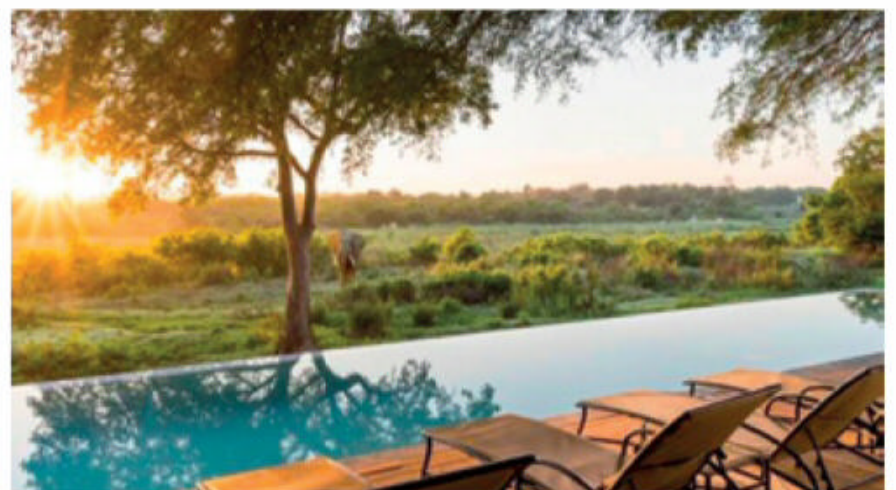
## BOOK FOR THE 2020 TROPHY

The 2020 edition of the Bundutech Defender Trophy will take place from 18-23 May and will have participants travelling from Limpopo South Africa through Zimbabwe and Mozambique and back to the starting point at Awelani Lodge. Entry fee is set at R10 000 per team (2 members per team) with R1 750 per additional member. For more info or to enter go to [www.defendertrophy.com](http://www.defendertrophy.com).



## CONNECTED SAFETY

Knowing what’s around the corner can be critical for drivers, and Ford tech is making this a reality. Local Hazard Information (LHI) marks a significant step towards a connected transport infrastructure by helping drivers prepare for and potentially avoid dangers. How it works is that when drivers ahead encounter sudden tailbacks, accidents or spilled loads, the driver/s behind are given advance warning. Triggers for the system come from what is happening in the cars ahead – which could include activated airbags, flashing warning lights, or windscreen wipers being put into operation. Previous traffic incident alert systems have relied on drivers to input information in order to generate alerts. LHI works autonomously, without the need for any driver interaction, to generate information and issue warnings. Hazards are displayed via the dashboard display if the incident is likely to impact on the driver’s journey. LHI technology is being rolled out across more than 80% of Ford’s passenger vehicle line-up by the end of this year. Crucially, the benefit will not be limited only to those travelling in Ford vehicles. Information sent can be used to alert drivers of other manufacturers’ vehicles, and vice-versa.



## KRUGER LUX ESCAPE

Keen to break your camping journey? Book in at the Protea Hotel by Marriott Kruger Gate, located at the Paul Kruger Gate. The hotel has re-opened after an R100-million upgrade and rebuild, which has expanded the room count from 96 to 138 and increased the range, now from basic standard rooms to a presidential suite. All rooms have en-suite bathrooms, air-conditioning, free wi-fi and in-room dining, plus there is an infinity pool and spa overlooking the Sabie River. For those who want to book into the likes of the Presidential Suite with its 10 rooms and personal butler, amongst other amenities, there’s also a helipad at the hotel.

## MOST WANTED

The 2019 calendar was yet another crackerjack year for the Toyota Hilux. The bakkie was the most searched for model in the used car market in South Africa, according to AutoTrader search data. Four off-road vehicles made the most-sold used car list, with the Ford Ranger second, followed by the Toyota Hilux (fourth) and Fortuner (seventh), with the Isuzu KB in tenth spot.





## RIGHT ON TIME

Zenith has worked with Land Rover to create a special edition watch celebrating the reimagining of the Defender as a motoring icon for the 21st century.

Limited to 250 pieces, the Defy 21 Land Rover Edition has emerged from a result of a four-year partnership between Land Rover and the historic Swiss watchmaker.

The chronograph goes for a raw and minimalist look, with a micro-blasted titanium case that absorbs light from all angles to better accentuate its faceted surfaces.

Through the specially-engraved case back, the display offers a view of the highly accurate El Primero movement with a custom oscillating weight in the form of a miniaturised five-spoke Land Rover wheel.

Custom choice is in the strap: either the 'Adventure' strap with an all-terrain textured rubber or the 'Country' grey rubber strap with a fabric effect and orange stitching.



## KEEP ROLLING

Potholes, poor road conditions, and accidents can all cause damage to alloy wheels which are a safety-critical suspension component with their own minimum standard, known as SANS1158.

All repairs to alloy wheels must fall within this standard, which is why Tiger Wheel & Tyre partners with Wheel CollisionT, the only wheel repairer in South Africa to be accredited by the SABS as being compliant with both SANS1158 and SABS ISO 9001 standards.

Wheel straightening can be done on-site at any one of the Wheel CollisionT Xpress Rim Repair Centres located on-site at selected Tiger Wheel & Tyre fitment centres countrywide. All stores are equipped to send wheels away to be expertly straightened, polished, powder-coated, or have custom paintwork done.



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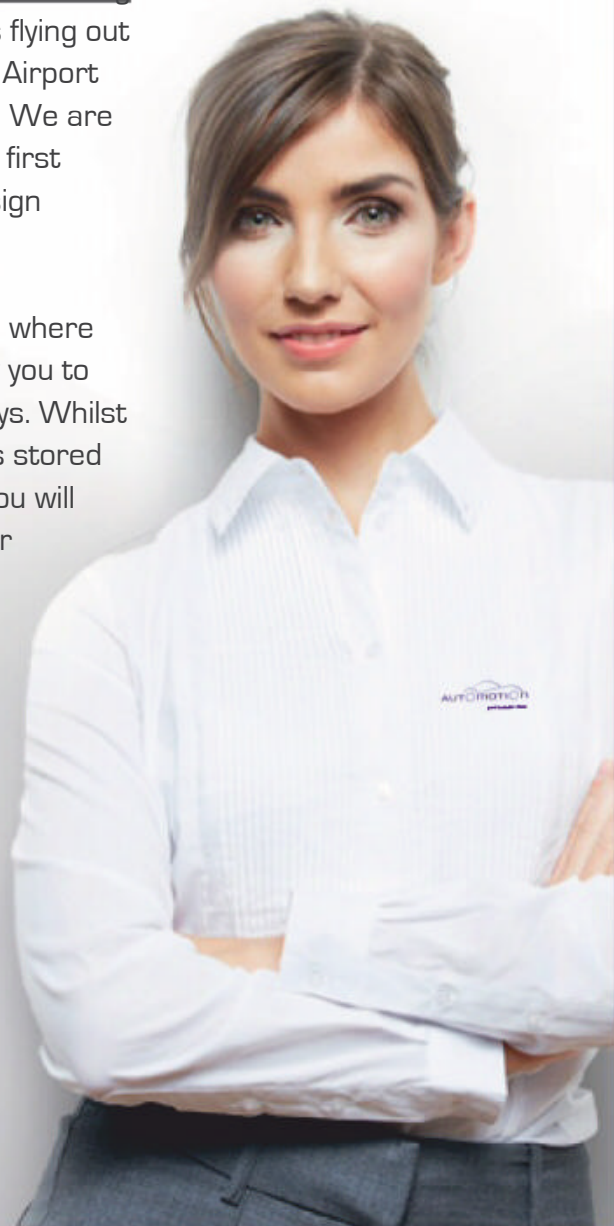
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Alex on a recent trip to Sossusvlei, with his superbly-kitted 100 Series overlander. This photo was taken, "...Somewhere near Fish River Canyon."

## ALEX KIOILOS

2000 Toyota Land Cruiser 100  
VX 4.7-litre V8 petrol

### Occupation:

Engineering machinery valuer

### Modifications:

Mechanicals are stock, but the Cruiser has been fitted with full Pedders suspension and shocks, with Ratel front and rear bumper with two spare wheel holders. Other mods include a snorkel and 17-inch wheels with Cooper ST Maxx tyres.

Overlanding-type additions include an 80-litre built-in water tank with 12V pump, 60-litre auxiliary fuel tank, and gull-wing panels in place of the rear windows. Up top, a Bundu Top hard-shell tent has been fitted, with a wood basket in front.

Interior changes include a complete roll-out storage system, along with a 66-litre Snomaster and 50-litre Waeco fridge. Two additional 100a/h batteries are onboard, charged via a C-Tek charging system and the option of a 330W solar panel plus 100W auxiliary solar panel.

There is also a built-in inverter.

### Future modifications:

This rig has everything I need, built from the experience of many trips.

### Dream car:

This is my dream car.

### Most memorable trip:

Caprivi, Chobe, and Ngepi Camp.

### Planned trips:

Caprivi, Etosha (again), Richtersveld (again).

### I never leave home without:

My passport. You never know where the track will take you. ●

## Submit your photo & WIN a Fredlin hoist

There's no point in driving around with your roof rack/ rooftop tent if you're not on holiday. Save fuel (and wear & tear) by installing a Fredlin hoist. This proudly South African product solves the problem of where to store your roof rack/ rooftop tent, canopy, or even a sports car hardtop: up and out of the way! The Fredlin hoist fastens securely to your garage roof or carport, is easily installed and can be operated by one person.

### TO ENTER

One Fredlin hoist will be given away every month to the lucky reader featured in Me & My 4x4. Simply send a photograph – 1MB or larger – and the answers to the categories shown above, to editor@sa4x4.co.za. Vehicle and

driver must be featured together in an off-road setting. (No driveway shots, please.)

### COMPETITION RULES

The decision as to which entries are featured rests solely with SA4x4; no correspondence will be entered into on this issue. Should Fredlin retract their sponsorship, SA4x4 reserves the right to publish any entries received without awarding any prize.

### CONTACT FREDLIN

For more information on the Fredlin hoist, go to [www.fredlin.co.za](http://www.fredlin.co.za) or contact Freddie Badenhorst on 082 553 0555, 012 661 8939 or sales@fredlin.co.za.



WIN!

FREDLIN





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